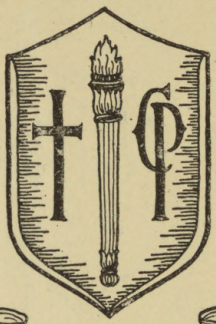
COLLECTED POEMS

VOL. I 1908-1917

JOHN DRINKWATER

COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC



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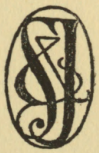
The Collected Poems of John Drinkwater



Albert Rutherston fecit

Emery Walker ph.sc.

The Collected Poems of John Drinkwater Volume I 1908-1917

Sidgwick and Jackson Limited: London 1923

College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

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Preface

The arrangement of these poems is, with slight modifications only, chronological. I have left out only such pieces as I do not want to be reprinted.

The dedications of a few individual poems stand as they first appeared. It would have complicated the arrangement of the present collection to include the dedications of the original volumes, but I remember gratefully the occasions of these.

J. D.

Summer 1923

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Symbols

I saw history in a poet's song,
In a river-reach and a gallows-hill,
In a bridal bed, and a secret wrong,
In a crown of thorns : in a daffodil.

I imagined measureless time in a day,
And starry space in a wagon-road,
And the treasure of all good harvests lay
In the single seed that the sower sowed.

My garden-wind had driven and havened again
All ships that ever had gone to sea,
And I saw the glory of all dead men
In the shadow that went by the side of me.

Sealed

The doves call down the long arcades of pine,
The screaming swifts are tiring towards their eaves,
And you are very quiet, O lover of mine.

No foot is on your ploughlands now, the song
Fails and is no more heard among your leaves
That wearied not in praise the whole day long.

I have watched with you till this twilight-fall,
The proud companion of your loveliness ;
Have you no word for me, no word at all ?

The passion of my thought I have given you,
Striving towards your passion, nevertheless,
The clover leaves are deepening to the dew,

And I am still unsatisfied, untaught.
You lie guarded in mystery, you go
Into your night, and leave your lover naught.

Would I were Titan with immeasurable thews
To hold you trembling, lover of mine, and know
To the full the secret savour that you use

Now to my tormenting. I would drain
Your beauty to the last sharp glory of it ;
You should work mightily through me, blood and
brain.

Your heart in my heart's mastery should burn,
And you before my swift and arrogant wit
Should be no longer proudly taciturn.

You should bend back astonished at my kiss,
Your wisdom should be armourer to my pride,
And you, subdued, should yet be glad of this.

The joys of great heroic lovers dead
Should seem but market-gossiping beside
The annunciation of our bridal bed.

And now, my lover earth, I am a leaf,
A wave of light, a bird's note, a blade sprung
Towards the oblivion of the sickled sheaf ;

A mere mote driven against your royal ease,
A tattered eager traveller among
The myriads beating on your sanctuaries.

I have no strength to crush you to my will,
Your beauty is invulnerably zoned,
Yet I, your undefeated lover still,

Exulting in your sap am clear of shame,
And biding with you patiently am throned
Above the flight of desolation's aim.

You may be mute, bestow no recompense
On all the thriftless leaguers of my soul—
I am at your gates, O lover of mine, and thence

Will I not turn for any scorn you send,
Rebuked, bemused, yet is my purpose whole,
I shall be striving towards you till the end.

Lord of Time

That I, some nameless æons hence,
May be a god, god fashioning,
With stars to break or recompense,
Is that so great a thing ?

It may be so. Some giant hand
May finger me as excellent clay,
Till I shall walk a cleaner land
In a more urgent day.

To the artificer joy. But now
Great days and passion of earth I crave,
True lips, the red rose of the bough,
The white rose of the wave.

There are known walls wherein I move
In joy no promised joy can veil,
And all my mastery of love
Is as a fireside tale.

The word that shapes a word again,
The storied song, the coloured year,

Laughter and tragic trust of men,
And fear that will not fear,

That straw that blows about the gate,
Those eyes that are my other sight,—
Of such are builded the estate
I know before the night.

Life and fierce life and life alone
Here upon earth I seek and claim,
Till my proud flesh again is thrown
To sea and wind and flame.

The gods are just ; eternity
May gird me for its lordlier clime ;
But here, where time encircles me,
I am a lord of time.

A Prayer

Lord, not for light in darkness do we pray,
Not that the veil be lifted from our eyes,
Nor that the slow ascension of our day
Be otherwise.

Not for a clearer vision of the things
Whereof the fashioning shall make us great,
Not for remission of the peril and stings
Of time and fate.

Not for a fuller knowledge of the end
Whereto we travel, bruised yet unafraid,
Nor that the little healing that we lend
Shall be repaid.

Not these, O Lord. We would not break the bars
Thy wisdom sets about us; we shall climb
Unfettered to the secrets of the stars
In Thy good time.

We do not crave the high perception swift
When to refrain were well, and when fulfil,
Nor yet the understanding strong to sift
The good from ill.

Not these, O Lord. For these Thou hast revealed,
We know the golden season when to reap
The heavy-fruited treasure of the field,
The hour to sleep.

Not these. We know the hemlock from the rose,
The pure from stained, the noble from the base,
The tranquil holy light of truth that glows
On Pity's face.

We know the paths wherein our feet should press,
Across our hearts are written Thy decrees,
Yet now, O Lord, be merciful to bless
With more than these.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,

Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

Knowledge we ask not—knowledge Thou hast lent,
But, Lord, the will—there lies our bitter need,
Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.

Vigil

I WATCH the good ships on the sea,
Yet never ship comes home to me.

Out of the crowded ports they sail
To crowded ports that cry them hail.

And still they bring no word to me,
Tall-masted ships upon the sea.

As gallant messengers they go
Laughing against all winds that blow.

Yet never ship upon the sea
Bears blessed merchandise for me.

I watch them pass from friend to friend
All day from world's end to world's end.

No pleasant ship comes down to me
Along the long leagues of the sea.

Nor sign nor salutation made,
Beyond the far sea-line they fade.

Yet as I watch them on the sea
All ships are piloted by me.

Expectancy

I KNOW the night is heavy with her stars,—
So much I know,—
I know the sun will lead the night away,
And lay his golden bars
Over the fields and mountains and great seas,
I know that he will usher in the day
With litanies
Of birds and young dawn-winds. So much I know,—
So little though.

I know that I am lost in a great waste,
A trackless world
Of stars and golden days, where shadows go
In mute and secret haste,
Paying no heed to supplicating cries
Of spirits lost and troubled,—this I know.
The regal skies
Utter no word, nor wind, nor changing sea,—
It frightens me.

Yet I believe that somewhere, soon or late,
A peace will fall
Upon the angry reaches of my mind ;
A peace initiate
In some heroic hour when I behold
A friend's long-quested triumph, or unbind
The tressèd gold
From a child's laughing face. I still believe,—
So much believe.

Or, when the reapers leave the swathèd grain,
I'll look beyond
The yellowing hazels in the twilight-tide,
Beyond the flowing plain,
And see blue mountains piled against a sky
Flung out in coloured ceremonial pride ;
Then haply I
Shall be no longer troubled, but shall know,—
It may be so.

The Building

WHENCE these hods, and bricks of bright red clay,
And swart men climbing ladders in the night ?

Stilled are the clamorous energies of day,
The streets are dumb, and, prodigal of light,
The lamps but shine upon a city of sleep.
A step goes out into the silence ; far
Across the quiet roofs the hour is tolled
From ghostly towers; the indifferent earth may keep
That ragged flotsam shielded from the cold
In earth's good time : not, moving among men,
Shall he compel so fortunate a star.
Pavements I know, forsaken now, are strange,
Alien walks not beautiful, that then,
In the familiar day, are part of all
My breathless pilgrimage, not beautiful, but dear ;
The monotony of sound has suffered change,
The eddies of wanton sound are spent, and clear
To bleak monotonies of silence fall.

And, while the city sleeps, in the central poise
Of quiet, lamps are flaming in the night,

Blown to long tongues by winds that moan
between
The growing walls, and throwing misty light
On swart men bearing bricks of bright red clay
In laden hods ; and ever the thin noise
Of trowels deftly fashioning the clean
Long lines that are the shaping of proud thought.
Ghost-like they move between the day and day,
These men whose labour strictly shall be wrought
Into the captive image of a dream.
Their sinews weary not, the plummet falls
To measured use from steadfast hands apace,
And momently the moist and levelled seam
Knits brick to brick and momently the walls
Bestow the wonder of form on formless space.

And whence all these ? The hod and plummet-
line,
The trowels tapping, and the lamps that shine
In long, dust-heavy beams from wall to wall,
The mortar and the bricks of bright red clay,
Ladder and corded scaffolding, and all
The gear of common traffic—whence are they ?
And whence the men who use them ?

When he came,
God upon chaos, crying in the name
Of all adventurous vision that the void
Should yield up man, and man, created, rose
Out of the deep, the marvel of all things made,
Then in immortal wonder was destroyed
All worth of trivial knowledge, and the close
Of man's most urgent meditation stayed
Even as his first thought—"Whence am I sprung?"
What proud ecstatic mystery was pent
In that first act for man's astonishment,
From age to unconfessing age, among
His manifold travel. And in all I see
Of common daily usage is renewed
This primal and ecstatic mystery
Of chaos bidden into many-hued
Wonders of form, life in the void create,
And monstrous silence made articulate.

Not the first word of God upon the deep
Nor the first pulse of life along the day
More marvellous than these new walls that sweep
Starward, these lines that discipline the clay,
These lamps swung in the wind that send their light

On swart men climbing ladders in the night.
No trowel-tap but sings anew for men
The rapture of quickening water and continent,
No mortared line but witnesses again
Chaos transfigured into lineament.

Forsaken

The word is said, and I no more shall know
Aught of the changing story of her days,
Nor any treasure that her lips bestow.

And I, who loving her was wont to praise
All things in love, now reft of music go
With silent step down unfrequented ways.

My soul is like a lonely market-place,
Where late were laughing folk and shining steeds
And many things of comeliness and grace ;

And now between the stones are twisting weeds,
No sound there is, nor any friendly face,
Save for a bedesman telling o'er his beads.

The Soldier

The large report of fame I lack,
  And shining clasps and crimson scars,
For I have held my bivouac
  Alone amid the untroubled stars.

My battle-field has known no dawn
  Beclouded by a thousand spears ;
I've been no mounting tyrant's pawn
  To buy his glory with my tears.

It never seemed a noble thing
  Some little leagues of land to gain
From broken men, nor yet to fling
  Abroad the thunderbolts of pain.

Yet I have felt the quickening breath
  As peril heavy peril kissed—
My weapon was a little faith,
  And fear was my antagonist.

Not a brief hour of cannonade,
But many days of bitter strife,
Till God of His great pity laid
Across my brow the leaves of life.

The Fires of God

I

Time gathers to my name ;
Along the ways wheredown my feet have passed
I see the years with little triumph crowned,
Exulting not for perils dared, downcast
And weary-eyed and desolate for shame
Of having been unstirred of all the sound
Of the deep music of the men that move
Through the world's days in suffering and love.

Poor barren years that brooded over-much
On your own burden, pale and stricken years—
Go down to your oblivion, we part
With no reproach or ceremonial tears.
Henceforth my hands are lifted to the touch
Of hands that labour with me, and my heart
Hereafter to the world's heart shall be set
And its own pain forget.
Time gathers to my name—
Days dead are dark ; the days to be, a flame
Of wonder and of promise, and great cries
Of travelling people reach me—I must rise.

II

Was I not man ? Could I not rise alone
Above the shifting of the things that be,
Rise to the crest of all the stars and see
The ways of all the world as from a throne ?
Was I not man, with proud imperial will
To cancel all the secrets of high heaven ?
Should not my sole unbridled purpose fill
All hidden paths with light when once was riven
God's veil by my indomitable will ?

So dreamt I, little man of little vision,
Great only in unconsecrated pride ;
Man's pity grew from pity to derision,
And still I thought, " Albeit they deride,
Yet is it mine uncharted ways to dare
Unknown to these,
And they shall stumble darkly, unaware
Of solemn mysteries
Whereof the key is mine alone to bear."

So I forgot my God, and I forgot
The holy sweet communion of men,
And moved in desolate places, where are not
Meek hands held out with patient healing when

The hours are heavy with uncharitable pain ;
No company but vain
And arrogant thoughts were with me at my side.
And ever to myself I lied,
Saying "Apart from all men thus I go
To know the things that they may never know."

III

Then a great change befell:
Long time I stood
In witless hardihood
With eyes on one sole changeless vision set—
The deep disturbèd fret
Of men who made brief tarrying in hell
On their earth travelling.
It was as though the lives of men should be
Set circle-wise, whereof one little span
Through which all passed was blackened with the wing
Of perilous evil, bateless misery,
But all beyond, making the whole complete
O'er which the travelling feet
Of every man
Made way or ever he might come to death,
Was odorous with the breath
Of honey-laden flowers, and alive
With sacrificial ministrations sweet
Of man to man, and swift and holy loves,
And large heroic hopes, whereby should thrive
Man's spirit as he moves
From dawn of life to the great dawn of death.

It was as though mine eyes were set alone
Upon that woeful passage of despair,
Until I held that life had never known
Dominion but in this most troubled place
Where many a ruined grace
And many a friendless care
Ran to and fro in sorrowful unrest.
Still in my hand I pressed
Hope's fragile chalice, whence I drew deep
draughts
That heartened me that even yet should grow
Out of this dread confusion, as of broken crafts
Driven along ungovernable seas,
Prosperous order, and that I should know
After long vigil all the mysteries
Of human wonder and of human fate.

O fool, O only great
In pride unhallowed, O most blind of heart!
Confusion but more dark confusion bred,
Grief nurtured grief, I cried aloud and said,
"Through trackless ways the soul of man is
hurled,
No sign upon the forehead of the skies,
No beacon, and no chart

Are given to him, and the inscrutable world
But mocks his scars and fills his mouth with dust."

And lies bore lies
And lust bore lust,
And the world was heavy with flowerless rods,
And pride outran
The strength of a man
Who had set himself in the place of gods.

IV

Soon was I then to gather bitter shame
Of spirit ; I had been most wildly proud—
Yet in my pride had been
Some little courage, formless as a cloud,
Unpiloted save by a vagrant wind,
But still an earnest of the bonds that tame
The legionary hates, of sacred loves that lean
From the high soul of man towards his kind.
And all my grief
Had been for those I watched go to and fro
In uncompassioned woe
Along that little span my unbelief
Had fashioned in my vision as all life.
Now even this so little virtue waned,
For I became caught up into the strife
That I had pitied, and my soul was stained
At last by that most venomous despair,
Self-pity.
I no longer was aware
Of any will to heal the world's unrest,
I suffered as it suffered, and I grew
Troubled in all my daily trafficking,
Not with the large heroic trouble known

By proud adventurous men who would atone
With their own passionate pity for the sting
And anguish of a world of peril and snares;
It was the trouble of a soul in thrall
To mean despairs,
Driven about a waste where neither fall
Of words from lips of love, nor consolation
Of grave eyes comforting, nor ministration
Of hand or heart could pierce the deadly wall
Of self—of self,—I was a living shame—
A broken purpose. I had stood apart
With pride rebellious and defiant heart,
And now my pride had perished in the flame.
I cried for succour as a little child
Might supplicate whose days are undefiled,—
For tutored pride and innocence are one.

To the gloom has won
A gleam of the sun
And into the barren desolate ways
A scent is blown
As of meadows mown
By cooling rivers in clover days.

V

I turned me from that place in humble wise,
And fingers soft were laid upon mine eyes,
And I beheld the fruitful earth, with store
Of odorous treasure, full and golden grain,
Ripe orchard bounty, slender stalks that bore
Their flowered beauty with a meek content,
The prosperous leaves that loved the sun and rain,
Shy creatures unreproved that came and went
In garrulous joy among the fostering green.
And, over all, the changes of the day
And ordered year their mutable glory laid—
Expectant winter soberly arrayed,
The prudent diligent spring whose eyes have seen
The beauty of the roses uncreate,
Imperial June, magnificent, elate
Beholding all the ripening loves that stray
Among her blossoms, and the golden time
Of the full ear and bounty of the boughs,—
And the great hills and solemn chanting seas
And prodigal meadows, answering to the chime
Of God's good year, and bearing on their brows
The glory of processional mysteries
From dawn to dawn, the woven leaves and light

Of the high noon, the twilight secrecies,
And the inscrutable wonder of the stars
Flung out along the reaches of the night.

And the ancient might
Of the binding bars
Waned as I woke to a new desire
For the choric song
Of exultant, strong
Earth-passionate men with souls of fire.

VI

'Twas given me to hear. As I beheld—
With a new wisdom, tranquil, asking not
For mystic revelation—this glory long forgot,
This re-discovered triumph of the earth
In high creative will and beauty's pride
Establishèd beyond the assaulting years,
It came to me, a music that compelled
Surrender of all tributary fears,
Full-throated, fierce, and rhythmic with the wide
Beat of the pilgrim winds and labouring seas,
Sent up from all the harbouring ways of earth
Wherein the travelling feet of men have trod,
Mounting the firmamental silences
And challenging the golden gates of God.

We bear the burden of the years
Clean-limbed, clear-hearted, open-browed,
Albeit sacramental tears
Have dimmed our eyes, we know the proud
Content of men who sweep unbowed
Before the legionary fears ;
In sorrow we have grown to be
The masters of adversity.

Wise of the storied ages we,
Of perils dared and crosses borne,
Of heroes bound by no decree
Of laws defiled or faiths outworn,
Of poets who have held in scorn
All mean and tyrannous things that be ;
We prophesy with lips that sped
The songs of the prophetic dead.

Wise of the brief belovèd span
Of this our glad earth-travelling,
Of beauty's bloom and ordered plan,
Of love and love's compassioning,
Of all the dear delights that spring
From man's communion with man ;
We cherish every hour that strays
Adown the cataract of the days.

We see the clear untroubled skies,
We see the summer of the rose
And laugh, nor grieve that clouds will rise
And wax with every wind that blows,

Nor that the blossoming time will close,
For beauty seen of humble eyes
Immortal habitation has
Though beauty's form may pale and pass.

Wise of the great unshapen age,
To which we move with measured tread
All girt with passionate truth to wage
High battle for the word unsaid,
The song unsung, the cause unled,
The freedom that no hope can gauge ;
Strong-armed, sure-footed, iron-willed
We sift and weave, we break and build.

Into one hour we gather all
The years gone down, the years unwrought,
Upon our ears brave measures fall
Across uncharted spaces brought,
Upon our lips the words are caught
Wherewith the dead the unborn call ;
From love to love, from height to height
We press and none may curb our might.

VII

O blessed voices, O compassionate hands,
Calling and healing, O great-hearted brothers !
I come to you. Ring out across the lands
Your benediction, and I too will sing
With you, and haply kindle in another's
Dark desolate hour the flame you stirred in me.
O bountiful earth, in adoration meet
I bow to you ; O glory of years to be,
I too will labour to your fashioning.
Go down, go down, unweariable feet,
Together we will march towards the ways
Wherein the marshalled hosts of morning wait
In sleepless watch, with banners wide unfurled
Across the skies in ceremonial state,
To greet the men who lived triumphant days,
And stormed the secret beauty of the world.

Challenge

You fools behind the panes who peer
  At the strong black anger of the sky,
  Come out and feel the storm swing by,
Aye, take its blow on your lips, and hear
  The wind in the branches cry.

No. Leave us to the day's device,
  Draw to your blinds and take your ease,
  Grow peak'd in the face and crook'd in the knees ;
Your sinews could not pay the price
  When the storm goes through the trees.

The Loom of the Poets

(TO THOMAS HARDY)

I

THEY who are sceptred of the poets' race
Their high dominion bear by this alone—
That they report the world as they have known
The world, nor seek with slavish hands to trace
Poor profitable smiles upon the face
Of truth when smiles are none, nor fear to own
The bitterness of beauty overthrown,
But hold in hate the gilded lie's disgrace.

And such are you, O singer of the gloom
Where-through in travail you have slowly won :
Albeit your song is heavy with the doom
Of men whose little strivings are foredone,
Yet is it woven on the living loom
Of your own suffering beneath the sun.

II

And herein lies great solace. Who shall say
If this austere and lonely utterance
Be closer knit to truth than theirs who dance
With happy hearts along the laughing way ?
Or matters it ? We know that you as they
Tell of the truth as you have seen it glance
Across the shadowed tracks of fate and chance,
At best a fitful promise of the day.

Great patience must be ours ere we may know
The secrets held by labyrinthine time ;
The ways are rough, the journeying is slow,
The perils deep,—till we have conquered these
And break at length upon the golden clime
He serves us best who sings but as he sees.

The Dead Critic

Not of the high heroic line was he
Who wrought the world's deep music, but he knew
The spring pellucid whence rapt poets drew
Brave draughts of Hippocrene ; he held in fee
The songs that woke to immortality,
Trembling from other lips. His loving grew
From loving unto prophecy ; he threw
Untruth from out the fields of poesy.

Yea, though he sang not, he was unto song
A light, a benediction. His desire
Was but to serve his heroes, and we reap
The fruit of his humility. Among
Their names shall his be spoken, and their quire
Shall let him fall upon no barren sleep.

Lines for the Opening of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre

To you good ease, and grace to love us well :
To us good ease, and grace some tale to tell
Worthy your love. We stand with one consent
To plead anew a holy argument—
For art is holy. We, to whom there falls
The charge that men may see within these walls
The comely chronicle of comely plays,
You, who shall quicken us with blame or praise
Desire alike but this, that here shall spring
Such issue of our labour as may bring
Fresh laurels to the altars that have known
Service of men whose passion might atone
For worlds than this more faithless, men whose names
Are very life—aye, swift and urgent flames
Of living are they. These are over us
To lighten all our travel : Aeschylus
Euripides, the Sophoclean song,
And Aristophanes who captured wrong
In nets of laughter, lords of the Attic stage,
The fourfold Greek dominion ; and the age

Of nameless poets when the hope began
To quicken from the blood of *Everyman*
Into the splendour of Marlowe's kingly lust
Of kingly life, the glory that thieves nor rust
Can ever spoil, whose name is manifold—
Ford, Massinger, Dekker, Webster aureoled
With light of hell made holy, Middleton,
Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, aye, and one
Whom even these the lords of beauty's passion
Might crown for beauty's high imperial fashion
In classic calm of intellectual rule,
Ben Jonson. Sirs, I am nor wit nor fool
To speak in praise of him whose name is praise,
Whose word is on the forehead of the days,
Shakespeare, our master tried and proved how well,
Mortality's immortal chronicle.

Under the warrant of these men we sail,
And theirs whose later labour these might hail,
Congreve and Otway : the Good-Natured Man,
Proud tattered Oliver : Dick Sheridan,
Who played at passion, but free-born of wit
Put scandal out to school and laughed at it ;
These few that stand between the golden age
When poets made a marvel of the stage

And—do we dare to dream it ?—an age that stirred
But yesterday, whereof the dawning word,—
Spoken when Ibsen spake, and here reset
To many tunes on lips untutored yet
For speech Olympian, albeit pure of will,—
Shall ripen into witness that we still
Are countrymen of those glad poets dead ;
The seed is sown, the barren days are sped.
And they who sowed, are sowing ? He beguiled
By who shall say what envious madness, Wilde,
Misfortune's moth and laughter's new wing-feather,
Remembering now no black despiteful weather :
Hankin, and he, the cleanser of our day,
Whose art is both a Preface and a Play,
And he who pities, as poets have pitied, life
Of *Justice* reft, so driven and torn in *Strife*,
And one who cries in *Waste* some news of man,
And one who finds in the bruised hearts of *Nan*
And *Pompey* tragic and old yet timeless things :
And that dead Playboy, and his peer who sings
Yet of Cuchulain by the western sea—
Of these is sown the seed that yet shall be
A heavy-waggoned harvest, masters mine,
Gathered by men whom now the immoderate wine
Of song is making ready.

In these walls
Look not for that light trickery that falls
To death at birth, wrought piecemeal at the will
Of apes who seek to ply their mimic skill:
Here shall the player work as work he may,
Yet shall he work in service of the play.
Nor shall you here find pitiful release
From life's large pressure, nay, but new increase
Of life made urgent by these master-men
Who are our captains. Life, and life again—
Tragic or brave, free-witted, gentle, signed
Of beauty's passion or the adventurous mind,
Or light as orchard blossom, motley wear,
But life's wear always—that shall be our care
And all shall surely follow. What may be
Hereafter—to the heavens, to us to see
No will transgressing on the poet's wish,
To you to judge the meat before the dish.
May you that watch and we that serve so grow
In wisdom as adventuring we go
That some unwavering light from us may shine.
We have the challenge of the mighty line—
God grant us grace to give the countersign.

Epilogue for a Masque

A LITTLE time they lived again, and lo !
Back to the quiet night the shadows go,
And the great folds of silence once again
Are over fools and kings and fighting-men.

A little while they went with stumbling feet,
With spears of hate, and love all flowery sweet,
With wondering hearts and bright adventurous
wills,
And now their dust is on a thousand hills.

We dream of them, as men unborn shall dream
Of us, who strive a little with the stream
Before we too go out beyond the day,
And are as much a memory as they.

And Death, so coming, shall not seem a thing
Of any fear, nor terrible his wing.
We too shall be a tale on earth, and time
Shall shape our pilgrimage into a rhyme.

A Sabbath Day

IN FIVE WATCHES

I. MORNING

(TO M. C.)

You were three men and women two,
And well I loved you, all of you,
  And well we kept the Sabbath day.
The bells called out of Malvern town,
But never bell could call us down
  As we went up the hill away.

Was it a thousand years ago
Or yesterday that men were so
  Zealous of creed and argument ?
Here wind is brother to the rain,
And the hills laugh upon the plain,
  And the old brain-gotten feuds are spent.

Bring lusty laughter, lusty jest,
Bring each the song he names the best,
  Bring eager thought and speech that's keen,
Tell each his tale and tell it out,
The only shame be prudent doubt,
  Bring bodies where the lust is clean.

College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

II. FULL DAY

(TO K. D.)

We moved along the gravelled way
  Between the laurels and the yews,
Some touch of old enchantment lay
  About us, some remembered news
Of men who rode among the trees
  With burning dreams of Camelot,
Whose names are beauty's litanies,
  As Galahad and Launcelot.

We looked along the vaulted gloom
  Of boughs unstripped of winter's bane,
As for some pride of scarf and plume
  And painted shield and broidered rein,
And through the cloven laurel walls
  We searched the darkling pines and pale
Beech-boles and woodbine coronals,
  As for the passing of the Grail.

But Launcelot no travel keeps,
  For brother Launcelot is dead,
And brother Galahad he sleeps
  This long while in his quiet bed,

And we are all the knights that pass
Among the yews and laurels now.
They are but fruit among the grass,
And we but fruit upon the bough.

No coloured blazon meets us here
Of all that courtly company;
Elaine is not, nor Guenevere,
The dream is but of dreams that die.
But yet the purple violet lies
Beside the golden daffodil,
And women strong of limb and wise
And fierce of blood are with us still.

And never through the woodland goes
The Grail of that forgotten quest,
But still about the woodland flows
The sap of God made manifest
In boughs that labour to their time,
And birds that gossip secret things,
And eager lips that seek to rhyme
The latest of a thousand springs.

III. DUSK

(TO E. S. V.)

We come from the laurels and daffodils
  Down to the homestead under the fell,
We've gathered our hunger upon the hills,
  And that is well.

Howbeit to-morrow gives or takes,
  And leads to barren or flowering ways,
We've a linen cloth and wheaten cakes,
  For which be praise.

Here in the valley at lambing-time
  The shepherd folk of their watching tell,
While the shadows up to the beacon climb,
  And that is well.

Let be what may when we make an end
  Of the laughter and labour of all our days,
We've men to friend and women to friend,
  For whom be praise.

IV. EVENSONG

(TO B. M.)

COME, let us tell it over,
Each to each by the fireside,
How that earth has been a swift adventure for us,
And the watches of the day as a gay song and a right song,
And now the traveller wind has found a bed,
And the sheep crowd under the thorn.

Good was the day and our travelling,
And now there is evensong to sing.

Night, and along the valleys
Watch the eyes of the homesteads.
The dark hills are very still and still are the stars.
Patiently under the ploughlands the wheat moves and the barley.
The secret hour of love is upon the sky,
And our thought in praise is aflame.

Sing evensong as well we may
For our travel upon this Sabbath day.

Earth, we have known you truly,
Heard your mutable music,
Have been your lovers and felt the savour of you,
And you have quickened in us the blood's fire and
the heart's fire.
We have wooed and striven with you and made you
ours
By the strength sprung out of your loins.

Lift the latch on its twisted thong,
And an end be made of our evensong.

V. NIGHT

(TO H. S. S.)

THE barriers of sleep are crossed
And I alone am yet awake,
Keeping another Pentecost
For that new visitation's sake
Of life descending on the hills
In blackthorn bloom and daffodils.

At peace upon my pillow lain
I celebrate the spirit come
In spring's immutable youth again
Across the lands of Christendom ;
I hear in all the choral host
The coming of the Holy Ghost.

The sacrament of bough and blade,
Of populous folds and building birds
I take, till now an end is made
Of praise and ceremonial words,
And I too turn myself to keep
The quiet festival of sleep.

March 1913.

Wed

I MARRIED him on Christmas morn,—
Ah woe betide, ah woe betide,
Folk said I was a comely bride,—
Ah me forlorn.

All braided was my golden hair,
And heavy then, and shining then,
My limbs were sweet to madden men,—
O cunning snare.

My beauty was a thing they say
Of large renown,—O dread renown,—
Its rumour travelled through the town,
Alas the day.

His kisses burn my mouth and brows,—
O burning kiss, O barren kiss,—
My body for his worship is,
And so he vows.

But daily many men draw near
With courtly speech and subtle speech ;

I gather from the lips of each
A deadly fear.

As he grows sullen I grow cold,
And whose the blame ? Not mine the blame ;
Their passions round me as a flame
All fiercely fold.

And oh, to think that he might be
So proudly set, above them set,
If he might but awaken yet
The soul of me.

Will no man seek and seeking find
The soul of me, the soul of me ?
Nay, even as they are, so is he,
And all are blind.

On Christmas morning we were wed,
Ah me the morn, the luckless morn ;
Now poppies burn along the corn,
Would I were dead.

Uncrowned

She drew the patterned curtains back
And let the moonlight in
And the cool night. There was no lack
Of lures that lead to sin
About her grey eyes tenanted
By secret laughters proud,
Her ripe lips were a miracle,
Her hair fell as a cloud
About her shoulders, and she stood
Most beautiful, a flame
Of passion tortured in the winds,
Her womanhood a shame,
Her beauty burning as a wound,
Her love a thing of blame.

A loathèd thing her love it seemed,
For ill her love had grown
As rotting fruit beneath the boughs
Among the grass unmown,
Beautiful once in sun and rain
And good winds cheerly blown.

Men came, a courtly crowd, to her,
And spoke of love aloud to her,
Day-long, day-long, they flattered her,
And called her beauty good,
But no man came with secret flame
To cover her and lend her name
A glory that should leaven all
Her holy womanhood—
Her hungry womanhood.

She watched the other women go
With quiet mates, the women so
Far set below her in the things
That make a woman fair.
And now she leant across the night,
Breast open to the soft moonlight,
And silver arrows of the moon
Were splintered in her hair.

" O God of all the yellow fields
Of stubble, God of stars,
Why should the woman that is me
Be prisoned in the bars

Fashioned by men because their eyes
Are sealed, their sweet souls dead—
Why should my armoured pride so make
Uncomraded my bed ?

" For that my beauty is a thing
To make a proven tale,
My speech to keep tired lids awake,
My laughter like a sail
Rippled upon a golden sea,
My wit a thing of worth,
They make a common troll of me,
Lord of the quiet earth.

" My name is heard throughout the land,
Men sing my body's praise,
They listen when I laugh, my words
Are coveted, my days
Are rich in tribute, yet I find
No man that dares to be
Lord of the secret heart I bear,
The woman that is me.

" How shall I speak ? How, being proud,
Shall I cry out that this
Woman they praise is hungering
For one unfettered kiss,
That she they make a song-burden
Is starving while they sing,
Starving among them all, O God,
How shall I cry this thing ?

" Hidden within my body's flame
And flames which are my soul
A secret beauty lies. Until
One rides to make it whole,
To set it on his brow, to make
It free yet never free,
Crying for birth goes wandering
The woman that is me.

" And while I wait I have no joy
Of homage nor the things
That make the seasons beautiful,
And folded are the wings

Whereon—ah well, night moves apace,
Anew the dawn-tide runs,—
Day and the little light that is
The shadow of Thy suns."

She curtained out the moonlight, pale
In marriage with the day.
As golden nets her golden hair
Along the pillows lay ;
And the wind stirred among the leaves,
And God's work went its way.

Derelict

The cloudy peril of the seas,
The menace of mid-winter days,
May break the scented boughs of ease
And lock the lips of praise,
But every sea its harbour knows,
And every winter wakes to spring,
And every broken song the rose
Shall yet re-sing.

But comfortable love once spent
May not re-shape its broken trust,
Or find anew the old content,
Dishonoured in the dust ;
No port awaits those tattered sails,
No sun rides high above that gloom,
Unchronicled those half-told tales
Shall time entomb.

Reckoning

I HEARD my love go laughing
  Beyond the bolted door,
I saw my love go riding
  Across the windy moor,
And I would give my love no word
Because of evil tales I heard.

Let fancy men go laughing,
  Let light men ride away,
Bruised corn is not for my mill,
  What's paid I will not pay,—
And so I thought because of this
Gossip that poisoned clasp and kiss.

Four hundred men went riding,
  And he the best of all,
A jolly man for labour,
  A sinewy man and tall;
I watched him go beyond the hill,
And shaped my anger with my will.

At night my love came riding
  Across the dusky moor,
And other two rode with him
  Who knocked my bolted door,
And called me out and bade me see
How quiet a man a man could be.

And now the tales that stung me
  And gave my pride its rule,
Are worth a beggar's broken shoe
  Or the sermon of a fool,
And all I know and all I can
Is, false or true, he was my man.

Pierrot

Pierrot alone,
And then Pierrette,
And then a story to forget.

Pierrot alone.
Pierrette among the apple boughs
Come down and take a Pierrot's kiss,
The moon is white upon your brows,
Pierrette among the apple boughs,
Your lips are cold, and I would set
A rose upon your lips, Pierrette,
A rosy kiss,
Pierrette, Pierrette.

And then Pierrette.
I've left my apple boughs, Pierrot,
A shadow now is on my face,
But still my lips are cold, and O
No rose is on my lips, Pierrot,
You laugh, and then you pass away
Among the scented leaves of May,
And on my face
The shadows stay.

And then a story to forget.
The petals fall upon the grass,
And I am crying in the dark,
The clouds above the white moon pass—
My tears are falling on the grass ;
Pierrot, Pierrot, I heard your vows
And left my blossomed apple boughs,
And sorrows dark
Are on my brows.

Love's Personality

If I had never seen
Thy sweet grave face,
If I had never known
Thy pride as of a queen,
Yet would another's grace
Have led me to her throne.

I should have loved as well
Not loving thee,
My faith had been as strong
Wrought by another spell;
Her love had grown to be
As thine for fire and song.

Yet is our love a thing
Alone, austere,
A new and sacred birth
That we alone could bring
Through flames of faith and fear
To pass upon the earth.

As one who makes a rhyme
Of his fierce thought,
With momentary art
May challenge change and time,
So is the love we wrought
Not greatest, but apart.

Love

Lord of the host of deep desires
  That spare no sting, yet are to me
Sole echo of the silver choirs
  Whose dwelling is eternity,

With all save thee my soul is pressed
  In high dispute from day to day,
But, Love, at thy most high behest
  I make no answer, and obey.

Lovers to Lovers

Our love forsworn
Was very love upon a day ;
Bitterness now, forlorn,
This tattered love once went as proud a way
As any born.

You well have kept
Your love from all corrupting things,
Your house of love is swept
And bright for use ; whatso each season brings
You may accept

In pride. But we ?
Our date of love is dead. Our blind
Brief moment was to be
The sum, yet was it signed as yours, and signed
Indelibly.

The Inviolable Hour

If ever you with riches should be bought,
And all your life become a little thing,
And all the bright adventure of your thought
Be curbed ; if time should bring
The passionate promise of your youth to naught ;

If you should never find the lordly will
To stir your beauty to a flame of flowers,
If, robed in precious merchandise, you still
Are subject to the powers
That bruise the grain God sows along the hill ;

If you should sell yourself in any wise
Save at love's bidding, and so fall to be
Life's drudge and outcast, yet, for that your eyes
No longer then should see
The light that once they borrowed from the skies,

You went of your own sorrow unaware
Save in swift moments of remembered days
When still the stars were tangled in your hair,
And all your limbs were praise,
And all your movement as a lyric prayer—

Should it be so, will you remember this,
That once a man, who watched your beauty grow,
And knew the waxing peril of your kiss,
And saw you turn and go,
Unweaponed, towards the world's untried abyss,

Made in his heart a record that your soul
Immortal beauty had, that you were strong
To keep the proudest purpose of you whole,
To meet the proudest wrong
Should look your vagrant spirit to control,—

Will you remember this ? The days may prove
The things alone of little worth in you,
You may beguile yourself that life and love,
So seared, have had their due,
That you in your right constellation move.

It may be so ; and you may violate
The seedling hope sown in a waste of fears,
Yet in his thought shall you be consecrate
With your immortal peers,
Your laughter true, your soul immaculate.

Liegewoman

You may not wear immortal leaves
  Nor yet go laurelled in your days,
But he believes
  Who loves you with most intimate praise
    That none on earth has ever gone,
    In whom a cleanlier spirit shone.

You may be unremembered when
  Our chronicles are piled in dust :
No matter then—
  None ever bore a lordlier lust
    To know the savour sweet or sour
    Down to the dregs of every hour.

And this your epitaph shall be—
  " Within life's house her eager words
Continually
  Lightened as wings of arrowy birds :
    She was life's house-fellow, she knew
    The passion of him, soul and thew."

From London

God of the cherry-bloom in the orchards of calm,
  Of sunlight on the little chestnut-leaves,
Of ghost-winged bees round the tassels of the palm,
  Be near me in this place. My spirit grieves.

I shall return unto thy kingdom soon,
  There is one waits my coming, and her brows
Are gravely turned upon thy heaped and fragrant
    boon
  Of daffodils and twisted budding boughs.

The scent of the ploughlands is calling me away,
  The chatter of the rooks, the open skies,
And she I know is waiting with the glory of the day
  And the shadow of the night in her eyes.

Roundels of the Year

I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

For you to whom each day is dear
Of all the high processional throng,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song.

And here some sound of beauty, here
Some note of ancient, ageless wrong
Reshaping as my lips were strong,
I caught the changes of the year
In soft and fragile nets of song,
For you to whom my days belong.

I

The spring is passing through the land
In web of ghostly green arrayed,
And blood is warm in man and maid.

The arches of desire have spanned
The barren ways, the debt is paid,
  The spring is passing through the land
  In web of ghostly green arrayed.

Sweet scents along the winds are fanned
From shadowy wood and secret glade
Where beauty blossoms unafraid,
  The spring is passing through the land
  In web of ghostly green arrayed,
  And blood is warm in man and maid.

II

Proud insolent June with burning lips
Holds riot now from sea to sea,
And shod in sovran gold is she.

To the full flood of reaping slips
The seeding-tide by God's decree,
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea.

And all the goodly fellowships
Of bird and bloom and beast and tree
Are gallant of her company—
  Proud insolent June with burning lips
  Holds riot now from sea to sea,
  And shod in sovran gold is she.

III

The loaded sheaves are harvested,
The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
The tale of labour crowned is told.

The wizard of the year has spread
A glory over wood and wold,
  The loaded sheaves are harvested,
  The sheep are in the stubbled fold.

The yellow apples and the red
Bear down the boughs, the hazels hold
No more their fruit in cups of gold.
  The loaded sheaves are harvested,
  The sheep are in the stubbled fold,
  The tale of labour crowned is told.

IV

The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom,
Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

And mute between the dusk and prime
The diligent earth resets her loom,—
The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom.

While o'er the snows the seasons chime
Their golden hopes to re-illume
The brief eclipse about the tomb,
The year is lapsing into time
Along a deep and songless gloom
Unchapleted of leaf or bloom.

V

Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

But you are wise of cloud and star,
And winds and boughs all blossom-hung,
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue.

Surely, clear child of earth, some far
Dim Dryad-haunted groves among,
Your lips to lips of knowledge clung—
Not wise as cunning scholars are,
With curious words upon your tongue,
Are you for whom my song is sung.

The Miracle

Come, sweetheart, listen, for I have a thing
Most wonderful to tell you—news of spring.

Albeit winter still is in the air,
And the earth troubled, and the branches bare,

Yet down the fields to-day I saw her pass—
The spring—her feet went shining through the grass.

She touched the ragged hedgerows—I have seen
Her finger-prints, most delicately green ;

And she has whispered to the crocus leaves,
And to the garrulous sparrows in the eaves.

Swiftly she passed and shyly, and her fair
Young face was hidden in her cloudy hair.

She would not stay, her season is not yet,
But she has reawakened, and has set

The sap of all the world astir, and rent
Once more the shadows of our discontent.

Triumphant news—a miracle I sing—
The everlasting miracle of spring.

Dominion

I WENT beneath the sunny sky
When all things bowed to June's desire,—
The pansy with its steadfast eye,
The blue shells on the lupin spire,

The swelling fruit along the boughs,
The grass grown heady in the rain,
Dark roses fitted for the brows
Of queens great kings have sung in vain ;

My little cat with tiger bars,
Bright claws all hidden in content ;
Swift birds that flashed like darkling stars
Across the cloudy continent ;

The wiry-coated fellow curled
Stump-tailed upon the sunny flags ;
The bees that sacked a coloured world
Of treasure for their honey-bags.

And all these things seemed very glad,
The sun, the flowers, the birds on wing,
The jolly beasts, the furry-clad
Fat bees, the fruit, and everything.

But gladder than them all was I,
  Who, being man, might gather up
The joy of all beneath the sky,
  And add their treasure to my cup,

And travel every shining way,
  And laugh with God in God's delight,
Create a world for every day,
  And store a dream for every night.

A Warwickshire Song

THERE are no oaks in all the shires
I love so well as those that spill
Smooth acorns from their mailèd cups
Along the Warwick lanes ; and still
The Avon holds as clear a way
As Tweed or Thames, and never blows
The wind along a sweeter land
Than that wheredown the Avon goes.

On northern hill and Sussex down,
In Derby dale and Lincoln fen,
I've trafficked with the winds of God
And talked and laughed with many men ;
I've seen the ploughshare break the earth
From Cumberland to woody Kent ;
I've followed Severn to the sea,
And heard the swollen tide of Trent.

I know the south, I know the north,
I've walked the counties up and down,
I've seen the ships go round the coast
From Mersey dock to London town ;

I've seen the spires of east and west,
And sung for joy of what I've seen,
But oh, my heart is ever fain
Of ways where Avon's oaks are green.

At Grafton

God laughed when he made Grafton
That's under Bredon Hill,
A jewel in a jewelled plain.
The seasons work their will
On golden thatch and crumbling stone,
And every soft-lipped breeze
Makes music for the Grafton men
In comfortable trees.

God's beauty over Grafton
Stole into roof and wall,
And hallowed every pavèd path
And every lowly stall,
And to a woven wonder
Conspired with one accord
The labour of the servant,
The labour of the Lord.

And momently to Grafton
Comes in from vale and wold
The sound of sheep unshepherded,
The sound of sheep in fold,

And, blown along the bases
Of lands that set their wide
Frank brows to God, comes chanting
The breath of Bristol tide.

A Picture

Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
No other light save the unclouded stars,
Their clusters broken by the scented downs
Massed up above us in the southern sky.
Two candles oaken-set upon blue folds,
Sending their little light along the board
Laid out beneath a honeysuckle hedge
In the cool dusk, with hospitable fare.
Blue folds clear-cut along the table's rim,
Until they meet the delicate blue robe
Of one who sends soft laughter through the hush,
Her face the haunt of clear repose and swift
Ripples of humour, gracious, mellowing.

. . . . . .

We shall remember in the barren days
Blue folds and raiment, little oaken lights,
The moth stars flitting through the ghostly dusk,
Fair brow and slender throat and kindly speech,
A hermitage of leaves and shadows, set
In the deep hollow of the Sussex hills.

January Dusk

Austere and clad in sombre robes of grey,
With hands upfolded and with silent wings,
In unimpassioned mystery the day
Passes ; a lonely thrush its requiem sings.

The dust of night is tangled in the boughs
Of leafless lime and lilac, and the pine
Grows blacker, and the star upon the brows
Of sleep is set in heaven for a sign.

Earth's little weary peoples fall on peace
And dream of breaking buds and blossoming,
Of primrose airs, of days of large increase,
And all the coloured retinue of spring.

Morning Thanksgiving

THANK God for sleep in the long quiet night,
For the clear day calling through the little leaded panes,
For the shining well-water and the warm golden light,
And the paths washed white by singing rains.

We thank Thee, O God, for exultation born
Of the kiss of Thy winds, for life among the leaves,
For the whirring wings that pass about the wonder of the morn,
For the changing plumes of swallows gliding upwards to their eaves.

For the treasure of the garden, the gillyflowers of gold,
The prouder petalled tulips, the primrose full of spring,
For the crowded orchard boughs, and the swelling buds that hold
A yet unwoven wonder, to Thee our praise we bring.

Thank God for good bread, for the honey in the comb,
For the brown-shelled eggs, for the clustered blossoms set
Beyond the open window in a pink and cloudy foam,
For the laughing loves among the branches met.

For the kind-faced women we bring our thanks to Thee,
With shapely mothering arms and grave eyes clear and blithe,
For the tall young men, strong-thewed as men may be,
For the old man bent above his scythe.

For earth's little secret and innumerable ways,
For the carol and the colour, Lord, we bring
What things may be of thanks, and that Thou hast lent our days
Eyes to see and ears to hear and lips to sing.

June Dance

The chestnut cones were in the lanes,
Blushing, and eyed with ebony,
And young oak-apples lovingly
Clung to their stems with rosy veins
Threading their glossy amber ; still
As wind may be, among the bloom
Of lilac and the burning broom
The dear wind moved deliciously,
And stayed upon the fragrant hill
And lightened on the sea ;
And brushed the nettles nodding through
The budding globes of cloudy may,
And wavelike flowed upon the blue
Flowers of the woods.
It was a day
When pearled blossom of peach and pear
Of blossoming season made an end,
Drifting along the sunlight, rare
Of beauty as thoughts between friend and friend
That have no cunning, but merely know
The way of truth for the heart is so.

It was such a time at the birth of June,
When the day was hushed at the hour of
noon,
And whispering leaves gave out a tune
Ghostly as moves the bodiless moon
High in the full-day skies of June,
That they passed, a throng
Of toilers whose eyes
Were dull with toiling—passed along,
By a path that lies
Between the city of mean emprise
And a forest set in mellow lands,
Far out from the city of broken hands.

Meanly clad, with bodies worn,
They came upon the forest hour,
From open fields of springing corn
To cloistered shades
They passed, from June light to June bower,
Tall men, and maids
Deep-bosomed, apt for any seed
That life should passionately sow,
Yet pale and troubled of a creed
Cried out by men who nothing know

Of joy's diviner excellence.
Along the silent glades they stept,
Till, flowing in each drowsy sense,
June came upon them, and they slept.

Beneath cool clustered branch and bloom,
Littered with stars of amethyst,
Sun-arrows glancing through the gloom,
They slept ; the lush young bracken kissed
The tired forms. Ah, well-away,
Within so wide a peace to see
Fellows who measure every day
Merely the roads of misery.

Tall men, deep-bosomed maids were they,
As who should face the world and run
Fleet-footed down the laughing way,
With brows set fearless to the sun,
But slackened were the rippling thews
And all clean moods of courage dead,
Defeated by ignoble use
And sullen dread.

So in the sweet June-tide they slept,
Nor any dream of healing deep

Came over them ; heart-sick they kept
A troubled sleep ;
Companions of calamity,
Their sleep was but remembered pain,
And all their hunger but to be
Poor pilgrims in oblivion's train.

The stems each had a little shadow
In the early afternoon,
When the toilers first were lured
By a music long immured
In the central forest ways
Where no human footfall strays,
To the dreaming dance of June.

One by one they woke, their faces
Still with some new wonder,
As when in quiet shadowy places
Wandering hands may move asunder
Secret foliage, and intrude
On the ancestral solitude
Of some untutored forest thing—
Neither doubt nor fear they bring,
But just a strange new wonder.

So now the toilers woke. No thought
Of the old-time trouble came
Over them ; the cares deep-wrought,
Furrowing, by years of shame,
Lightened, as upon their ears
Fell a music very low,
Sweet with moving of the years,
Burdened with the beat and flow
Of a garnered ecstasy
Gathered from the deeps of pain,
Music vaster than the sea,
Softer than the rain.

Then they rose,—the music played
But a little way ahead.
And with never question made
They were well to follow. Red
And gold and opal flashed the noon
On lichened trunk. Their raiment mean
Grew heavy in the dance of June,
And man and maid among the green
Unburdened them, and stood revealed
In clean unblushing loveliness,
Clear glowing limbs, all supple, steeled
And shining ; many a streaming tress

Slipped beautiful to breast and knee,
They proved a world where was no sin,
Exultant, pure in passion, free,
Young captives bidden to begin
New being. Sweet the music called,
Promising immortal boon,
Swift they set their feet, enthralled,
To the dreaming dance of June.

They passed into the forest's heart,
Where the shadows thickened,
Soul and trembling body thrilled
With a joy new-quickened.
It was as though from early days
Their familiars
Had been the words of worship of the lonely wood-
land ways,
And the articulate voices of the stars.

Keeping perfect measure
To the music's chime,
Reaping all the treasure
Of the summer time,
Noiselessly along the glades,
Lithe white limbs all glancing,

Comely men and comely maids
Drifted in their dancing.

When chestnut-cones were in the lanes,
Blushing, and eyed with ebony,
And young oak-apples lovingly
Clung to their stems with rosy veins
Threading their glossy amber—then
They took them to faring, maids and men,
Whose eyes were dull with toiling, far
From their toil in the time of a perfect noon,
To where the quiet shadows are,
And joined the dreaming dance of June.

Late Summer

Though summer long delayeth
  Her blue and golden boon,
Yet now at length she stayeth
  Her wings above the noon ;
She sets the waters dreaming
  To murmurous leafy tones,
The weeded waters gleaming
  Above the stepping-stones.

Where fern and ivied willow
  Lean o'er the seaward brook,
I read a volume mellow—
  A poet's fairy-book ;
The seaward brook is narrow,
  The hazel spans its pride,
And like a painted arrow
  The king-bird keeps the tide.

The Broken Gate

I KNOW a little broken gate
  Beneath the apple-boughs and pines,
The seasons lend it coloured state,
  And round its hinge the ivy twines—
The ivy and the bloomless rose,
  And autumn berries flaming red ;
The pine its gracious scent bestows,
  The apple-boughs their treasure shed.

It opens on an orchard hung
  With heavy-laden boughs that spill
Their brown and yellow fruit among
  The withered stems of daffodil :
The river from its shallows freed
  Here falls upon a stirless peace,
The tides of time suspended lead
  The tired spirit to release.

A little land of mellowed ease
  I find beyond my broken gate,

I hear amid the laden trees
A magic song, and there elate
I pass along from sound and sight
Of men who fret the world away,—
I gather rich and rare delight
Where every day is holy day.

In the Woods

I WAS in the woods to-day,
And the leaves were spinning there,
Rich apparelled in decay,—
In decay more wholly fair
Than in life they ever were.

Gold and rich barbaric red
Freakt with pale and sapless vein,
Spinning, spinning, spun and sped
With a little sob of pain
Back to harbouring earth again.

Long in homely green they shone
Through the summer rains and sun,
Now their humbleness is gone,
Now their little season run,
Pomp and pageantry begun.

Sweet was life and buoyant breath,
Lovely too ; but for a day
Issues from the house of death
Yet more beautiful array :
Hark, a whisper—" Come away."

One by one they spin and fall,
But they fall in regal pride :
Dying, do they hear a call
Rising from an ebbless tide,
And, hearing, are beatified ?

Travel Talk

(TO E. DE S.)

LADYWOOD, 1912

To the high hills you took me, where desire,
Daughter of difficult life, forgets her lures,
And hope's eternal tasks no longer tire,
And only peace endures.
Where anxious prayer becomes a worthless thing
Subdued by muted praise,
And asking nought of God and life we bring
The conflict of long days
Into a moment of immortal poise
Among the scars and proud unbuilded spires,
Where, seeking not the triumphs and the joys
So treasured in the world, we kindle fires
That shall not burn to ash, and are content
To read anew the eternal argument.

Nothing of man's intolerance we know
Here, far from man, among the fortressed hills,
Nor of his querulous hopes.
To what may we attain ? What matter, so

We feel the unwearied virtue that fulfils
These cloudy crests and rifts and heathered slopes
With life that is and seeks not to attain,
For ever spends nor ever asks again ?

To the high hills you took me. And we saw
The everlasting ritual of sky
And earth and the waste places of the air,
And momently the change of changeless law
Was beautiful before us, and the cry
Of the great winds was as a distant prayer
From a massed people, and the choric sound
Of many waters moaning down the long
Veins of the hills was as an undersong ;
And in that hour we moved on holy ground.

To the high hills you took me. Far below
Lay pool and tarn locked up in shadowy sleep ;
Above we watched the clouds unhasting go
From hidden crest to crest ; the neighbour sheep
Cropped at our side, and swift on darkling wings
The hawks went sailing down the valley wind,
The rock-bird chattered shrilly to its kind ;
And all these common things were holy things.

From ghostly Skiddaw came the wind in flight.
By Langdale Pikes to Coniston's broad brow,
From Coniston to proud Helvellyn's height,
The eloquent wind, the wind that even now
Whispers again its story gathered in
For seasons of much traffic in the ways
Where men so straitly spin
The garment of unfathomable days.

To the high hills you took me. And we turned
Our feet again towards the friendly vale,
And passed the banks whereon the bracken burned
And the last foxglove bells were spent and pale,
Down to a hallowed spot of English land
Where Rotha dreams its way from mere to mere,
Where one with undistracted vision scanned
Life's far horizons, he who sifted clear
Dust from the grain of being, making song
Memorial of simple men and minds
Not bowed to cunning by deliberate wrong,
And conversed with the spirit of the winds,
And knew the guarded secrets that were sealed
In pool and pine, petal and vagrant wing,
Throning the shepherd folding from the field,
Robing anew the daffodils of spring.

We crossed the threshold of his home and stood
Beside his cottage hearth where once was told
The day's adventure drawn from fell and wood,
And wisdom's words and love's were manifold,
Where, in the twilight, gossip poets met
To read again their peers of older time,
And quiet eyes of gracious women set
A bounty to the glamour of the rhyme.

There is a wonder in a simple word
That reinhabits fond and ghostly ways,
And when within the poet's walls we heard
One white with ninety years recall the days
When he upon his mountain paths was seen,
We answered her strange bidding and were made
One with the reverend presence who had been
Steward of kingly charges unbetrayed.

And to the little garden-close we went,
Where he at eventide was wont to pass
To watch the willing day's last sacrament,
And the cool shadows thrown along the grass,
To read again the legends of the flowers,
Lighten with song th' obscure heroic plan,

To contemplate the process of the hours,
And think on that old story which is man.
The lichened apple-boughs that once had spent
Their blossoms at his feet, in twisted age
Yet knew the wind, and the familiar scent
Of heath and fern made sweet his hermitage.
And, moving so beneath his cottage-eaves,
His song upon our lips, his life a star,
A sign, a storied peace among the leaves,
Was he not with us then ? He was not far.

To the high hills you took me. We had seen
Much marvellous traffic in the cloudy ways,
Had laughed with the white waters and the green,
Had praised and heard the choric chant of praise,
Communed anew with the undying dead,
Resung old songs, retold old fabulous things,
And, stripped of pride, had lost the world and led
A world refashioned as unconquered kings.

And the good day was done, and there again
Where is your home of quietness we stood,
Far from the sight and sound of travelling men,
And watched the twilight climb from Ladywood

Above the pines, above the visible streams,
Beyond the hidden sources of the rills,
Bearing the season of uncharted dreams
Into the silent fastness of the hills.

Peace on the hills, and in the valleys peace ;
And Rotha's moaning music sounding clear ;
The passing-song of wearied winds that cease,
Moving among the reeds of Rydal Mere ;
The distant gloom of boughs that still unscarred
Beside their poet's grave due vigil keep—
With us were these, till night was throned and
starred
And bade us to the benison of sleep.

The Crowning of Dreaming John

I

Seven days he travelled
Down the roads of England,
Out of leafy Warwick lanes
Into London Town.
Grey and very wrinkled
Was Dreaming John of Grafton,
But seven days he walked to see
A king put on his crown.

Down the streets of London
He asked the crowded people
Where would be the crowning
And when would it begin.
He said he'd got a shilling,
A shining silver shilling,
But when he came to Westminster
They wouldn't let him in.

Dreaming John of Grafton
Looked upon the people,

Laughed a little laugh, and then
Whistled and was gone.
Out along the long roads,
The twisting roads of England,
Back into the Warwick lanes
Wandered Dreaming John.

II

As twilight touched with her ghostly fingers
All the meadows and mellow hills,
And the great sun swept in his robes of glory—
Woven of petals of daffodils
And jewelled and fringed with leaves of the roses—
Down the plains of the western way,
Among the rows of the scented clover
Dreaming John in his dreaming lay.

Since dawn had folded the stars of heaven
He'd counted a score of miles and five,
And now, with a vagabond heart untroubled
And proud as the properest man alive,
He sat him down with a limber spirit
That all men covet and few may keep,
And he watched the summer draw round her beauty
The shadow that shepherds the world to sleep.

And up from the valleys and shining rivers,
And out of the shadowy wood-ways wild,
And down from the secret hills, and streaming
Out of the shimmering undefiled

Wonder of sky that arched him over,
Came a company shod in gold
And girt in gowns of a thousand blossoms,
Laughing and rainbow-aureoled.

Wrinkled and grey and with eyes a-wonder
And soul beatified, Dreaming John
Watched the marvellous company gather
While over the clover a glory shone ;
They bore on their brows the hues of heaven,
Their limbs were sweet with flowers of the fields,
And their feet were bright with the gleaming
treasure
That prodigal earth to her children yields.

They stood before him, and John was laughing
As they were laughing ; he knew them all,
Spirits of trees and pools and meadows,
Mountain and windy waterfall,
Spirits of clouds and skies and rivers,
Leaves and shadows and rain and sun,
A crowded, jostling, laughing army,
And Dreaming John knew every one.

Among them then was a sound of singing
And chiming music, as one came down
The level rows of the scented clover,
Bearing aloft a flashing crown ;
No word of a man's desert was spoken,
Nor any word of a man's unworth,
But there on the wrinkled brow it rested,
And Dreaming John was king of the earth.

III

Dreaming John of Grafton
Went away to London,
Saw the coloured banners fly,
Heard the great bells ring,
But though his tongue was civil
And he had a silver shilling,
They wouldn't let him in to see
The crowning of the King.

So back along the long roads,
The leafy roads of England,
Dreaming John went carolling,
Travelling alone,
And in a summer evening,
Among the scented clover,
He held before a shouting throng
A crowning of his own.

The Traveller

When March was master of furrow and fold,
And the skies kept cloudy festival,
And the daffodil pods were tipped with gold
And a passion was in the plover's call,
A spare old man went hobbling by
With a broken pipe and a tapping stick,
And he mumbled—" Blossom before I die,
Be quick, you little brown buds, be quick.

" I've weathered the world for a count of years—
Good old years of shining fire—
And death and the devil bring no fears,
And I've fed the flame of my last desire ;
I'm ready to go, but I'd pass the gate
On the edge of the world with an old heart sick
If I missed the blossoms. I may not wait—
The gate is open—be quick, be quick."

The Vagabond

I KNOW the pools where the grayling rise,
I know the trees where the filberts fall,
I know the woods where the red fox lies,
The twisted elms where the brown owls call.
And I've seldom a shilling to call my own,
And there's never a girl I'd marry,
I thank the Lord I'm a rolling stone
With never a care to carry.

I talk to the stars as they come and go
On every night from July to June,
I'm free of the speech of the winds that blow,
And I know what weather will sing what tune.
I sow no seed and I pay no rent,
And I thank no man for his bounties,
But I've a treasure that's never spent,
I'm lord of a dozen counties.

The Feckenham Men

The jolly men at Feckenham
Don't count their goods as common men,
Their heads are full of silly dreams
From half-past ten to half-past ten,
They'll tell you why the stars are bright,
And some sheep black and some sheep white.

The jolly men at Feckenham
Draw wages of the sun and rain,
And count as good as golden coin
The blossoms on the window-pane,
And Lord ! they love a sinewy tale
Told over pots of foaming ale.

Now here's a tale of Feckenham
Told to me by a Feckenham man,
Who, being only eighty years,
Ran always when the red fox ran,
And looked upon the earth with eyes
As quiet as unclouded skies.

These jolly men of Feckenham
One day when summer strode in power
Went down, it seems, among their lands
And saw their bean fields all in flower—
"Wheat-ricks," they said, "be good to see;
What would a rick of blossoms be?"

So straight they brought the sickles out
And worked all day till day was done,
And builded them a good square rick
Of scented bloom beneath the sun.
And was not this I tell to you
A fiery-hearted thing to do?

Old Woman in May

"Old woman by the hedgerow
In gown of withered black,
With beads and pins and buttons
And ribbons in your pack—
How many miles do you go?
To Dumbleton and back?"

"To Dumbleton and back, sir,
And round by Cotsall Hill,
I count the miles at morning,
At night I count them still,
A Jill without a Jack, sir,
I travel with a will."

"It's little men are paying
For such as you can do,
You with the grey dust in your hair
And sharp nails in your shoe,
The young folks go a-Maying,
But what is May to you?"

"I care not what they pay me
  While I can hear the call
Of cattle on the hillside,
  And watch the blossoms fall
In a churchyard where maybe
There's company for all."

In Lady Street

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops—
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers—
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. "Buy, buy!" the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,
A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,
Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street ; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots ; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops ;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone—yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies

A trade, a coloured trade. A show
Of many-coloured merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground,
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums;
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favour stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long
In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,

And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-coloured merchandise
He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of colour through the air ;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

An Epilogue

Come tell us, you that travel far
With brave or shabby merchandise,
Have you saluted any star
That goes uncourtiered in the skies ?

Do you remember leaf or wing
Or brook the willows leant along,
Or any small familiar thing
That passed you as you went along ?

Or does the trade that is your lust
Drive you as yoke-beasts driven apace,
Making the world a road of dust
From market-place to market-place ?

You traffic in the grain, the wine,
In purple and in cloth of gold,
In treasure of the field and mine,
In fables of the poets told,—

But have you laughed the wine-cups dry
And on the loaves of plenty fed,

And walked, with all your banners high,
In gold and purple garmented ?

And do you know the songs you sell
And cry them out along the way ?
And is the profit that you tell
After your travel day by day

Sinew and sap of life, or husk—
Dead coffer-ware or kindled brain ?
And do you gather in the dusk
To make your heroes live again ?

If the grey dust is over all,
And stars and leaves and wings forgot,
And your blood holds no festival—
Go out from us ; we need you not.

But if you are immoderate men,
Zealots of joy, the salt and sting
And savour of life upon you—then
We call you to our counselling.

And we will hew the holy boughs
  To make us level rows of oars,
And we will set our shining prows
  For strange and unadventured shores.

Where the great tideways swiftliest run
  We will be stronger than the strong,
And sack the cities of the sun,
  And spend our booty in a song.

The Carver in Stone

He was a man with wide and patient eyes,
Grey, like the drift of twitch-fires blown in June,
That, without fearing, searched if any wrong
Might threaten from your heart. Grey eyes he had
Under a brow was drawn because he knew
So many seasons to so many pass
Of upright service, loyal, unabased
Before the world seducing, and so, barren
Of good words praising and thought that mated his.
He carved in stone. Out of his quiet life
He watched as any faithful seaman charged
With tidings of the myriad faring sea,
And thoughts and premonitions through his mind
Sailing as ships from strange and storied lands
His hungry spirit held, till all they were
Found living witness in the chiselled stone.
Slowly out of the dark confusion, spread
By life's innumerable venturings
Over his brain, he would triumph into the light
Of one clear mood, unblemished of the blind
Legions of errant thought that cried about
His rapt seclusion: as a pearl unsoiled,

Nay, rather washed to lonelier chastity,
In gritty mud. And then would come a bird,
A flower, or the wind moving upon a flower,
A beast at pasture, or a clustered fruit,
A peasant face as were the saints of old,
The leer of custom, or the bow of the moon
Swung in miraculous poise—some stray from the
world
Of things created by the eternal mind
In joy articulate. And his perfect mood
Would dwell about the token of God's mood,
Until in bird or flower or moving wind
Or flock or shepherd or the troops of heaven
It sprang in one fierce moment of desire
To visible form.
Then would his chisel work among the stone,
Persuading it of petal or of limb
Or starry curve, till risen anew there sang
Shape out of chaos, and again the vision
Of one mind single from the world was pressed
Upon the daily custom of the sky
Or field or the body of man.

His people
Had many gods for worship. The tiger-god,

The owl, the dewlapped bull, the running pard,
The camel and the lizard of the slime,
The ram with quivering fleece and fluted horn,
The crested eagle and the doming bat
Were sacred. And the king and his high priests
Decreed a temple, wide on columns huge,
Should top the cornlands to the sky's far line.
They bade the carvers carve along the walls
Images of their gods, each one to carve
As he desired, his choice to name his god. . . .
And many came ; and he among them, glad
Of three leagues' travel through the singing air
Of dawn among the boughs yet bare of green,
The eager flight of the spring leading his blood
Into swift lofty channels of the air,
Proud as an eagle riding to the sun. . . .
An eagle, clean of pinion—there's his choice.

Daylong they worked under the growing roof,
One at his leopard, one the staring ram,
And he winning his eagle from the stone,
Until each man had carved one image out,
Arow beyond the portal of the house.
They stood arow, the company of gods,
Camel and bat, lizard and bull and ram,

The pard and owl, dead figures on the wall,
Figures of habit driven on the stone
By chisels governed by no heat of the brain
But drudges of hands that moved by easy rule.
Proudly recorded mood was none, no thought
Plucked from the dark battalions of the mind
And throned in everlasting sight. But one
God of them all was witness of belief
And large adventure dared. His eagle spread
Wide pinions on a cloudless ground of heaven,
Glad with the heart's high courage of that dawn
Moving upon the ploughlands newly sown,
Dead stone the rest. He looked, and knew it so.

Then came the king with priests and counsellors
And many chosen of the people, wise
With words weary of custom, and eyes askew
That watched their neighbour face for any news
Of the best way of judgment, till, each sure
None would determine with authority,
All spoke in prudent praise. One liked the owl
Because an owl blinked on the beam of his barn.
One, hoarse with crying gospels in the street,
Praised most the ram, because the common folk
Wore breeches made of ram's wool. One declared

The tiger pleased him best,—the man who carved
The tiger-god was halt out of the womb—
A man to praise, being so pitiful.
And one, whose eyes dwelt in a distant void,
With spell and omen pat upon his lips,
And a purse for any crystal prophet ripe,
A zealot of the mist, gazed at the bull—
A lean ill-shapen bull of meagre lines
That scarce the steel had graved upon the stone—
Saying that here was very mystery
And truth, did men but know. And one there was
Who praised his eagle, but remembering
The lither pinion of the swift, the curve
That liked him better of the mirrored swan.
And they who carved the tiger-god and ram,
The camel and the pard, the owl and bull,
And lizard, listened greedily, and made
Humble denial of their worthiness,
And when the king his royal judgment gave
That all had fashioned well, and bade that each
Re-shape his chosen god along the walls
Till all the temple boasted of their skill,
They bowed themselves in token that as this
Never had carvers been so fortunate.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Made no denial, neither bowed his head.
Already while they spoke his thought had gone
Far from his eagle, leaving it for a sign
Loyally wrought of one deep breath of life,
And played about the image of a toad
That crawled among his ivy leaves. A queer
Puff-bellied toad, with eyes that always stared
Sidelong at heaven and saw no heaven there,
Weak-hammed, and with a throttle somehow twisted
Beyond full wholesome draughts of air, and skin
Of wrinkled lips, the only zest or will
The little flashing tongue searching the leaves.
And king and priest, chosen and counsellor,
Babbling out of their thin and jealous brains,
Seemed strangely one; a queer enormous toad
Panting under giant leaves of dark,
Sunk in the loins, peering into the day.
Their judgment wry he counted not for wrong
More than the fabled poison of the toad
Striking at simple wits; how should their thought
Or word in praise or blame come near the peace
That shone in seasonable hours above
The patience of his spirit's husbandry?
They foolish and not seeing, how should he

Spend anger there or fear—great ceremonies
Equal for none save great antagonists ?
The grave indifference of his heart before them
Was moved by laughter innocent of hate,
Chastising clean of spite, that moulded them
Into the antic likeness of his toad
Bidding for laughter underneath the leaves.

He bowed not, nor disputed, but he saw
Those ill-created joyless gods, and loathed,
And saw them creeping, creeping round the walls,
Death breeding death, wile witnessing to wile,
And sickened at the dull iniquity
Should be rewarded, and for ever breathe
Contagion on the folk gathered in prayer.
His truth should not be doomed to march among
This falsehood to the ages. He was called,
And he must labour there; if so the king
Would grant it, where the pillars bore the roof
A galleried way of meditation nursed
Secluded time, with wall of ready stone
In panels for the carver set between
The windows—there his chisel should be set,—
It was his plea. And the king spoke of him,
Scorning, as one lack-fettle, among all these

Eager to take the riches of renown ;
One fearful of the light or knowing nothing
Of light's dimension, a witling who would throw
Honour aside and praise spoken aloud
All men of heart should covet. Let him go
Grubbing out of the sight of these who knew
The worth of substance ; there was his proper trade.

A squat and curious toad indeed. . . . The eyes,
Patient and grey, were dumb as were the lips,
That, fixed and governed, hoarded from them all
The larger laughter lifting in his heart.
Straightway about his gallery he moved,
Measured the windows and the virgin stone,
Till all was weighed and patterned in his brain.
Then first where most the shadow struck the wall,
Under the sills, and centre of the base,
From floor to sill out of the stone was wooed
Memorial folly, as from the chisel leapt
His chastening laughter searching priest and king—
A huge and wrinkled toad, with legs asplay,
And belly loaded, leering with great eyes
Busily fixed upon the void.

All days
His chisel was the first to ring across

The temple's quiet ; and at fall of dusk
Passing among the carvers homeward, they
Would speak of him as mad, or weak against
The challenge of the world, and let him go
Lonely, as was his will, under the night
Of stars or cloud or summer's folded sun,
Through crop and wood and pastureland to sleep.
None took the narrow stair as wondering
How did his chisel prosper in the stone,
Unvisited his labour and forgot.
And times when he would lean out of his height
And watch the gods growing along the walls,
The row of carvers in their linen coats
Took in his vision a virtue that alone
Carving they had not nor the thing they carved.
Knowing the health that flowed about his close
Imagining, the daily quiet won
From process of his clean and supple craft,
Those carvers there, far on the floor below,
Would haply be transfigured in his thought
Into a gallant company of men
Glad of the strict and loyal reckoning
That proved in the just presence of the brain
Each chisel-stroke. How surely would he prosper
In pleasant talk at easy hours with men

So fashioned if it might be—and his eyes
Would pass again to those dead gods that grew
In spreading evil round the temple walls ;
And, one dead pressure made, the carvers moved
Along the wall to mould and mould again
The self-same god, their chisels on the stone
Tapping in dull precision as before,
And he would turn, back to his lonely truth.

He carved apace. And first his people's gods,
About the toad, out of their sterile time,
Under his hand thrilled and were recreate.
The bull, the pard, the camel and the ram,
Tiger and owl and bat—all were the signs,
Visibly made body on the stone,
Of sightless thought adventuring the host
That is mere spirit ; these the bloom achieved
By secret labour in the flowing wood
Of rain and air and wind and continent sun. . . .
His tiger, lithe, immobile in the stone,
A swift destruction for a moment leashed,
Sprang crying from the jealous stealth of men
Opposed in cunning watch, with engines hid
Of torment and calamitous desire.
His leopard, swift on lean and paltry limbs,

Was fear in flight before accusing faith.
His bull, with eyes that often in the dusk
Would lift from the sweet meadow grass to watch
Him homeward passing, bore on massy beam
The burden of the patient of the earth.
His camel bore the burden of the damned,
Being gaunt, with eyes aslant along the nose.
He had a friend, who hammered bronze and iron
And cupped the moonstone on a silver ring,
One constant like himself, would come at night
Or bid him as a guest, when they would make
Their poets touch a starrier height, or search
Together with unparsimonious mind
The crowded harbours of mortality.
And there were jests, wholesome as harvest ale,
Of homely habit, bred of hearts that dared
Judgment of laughter under the eternal eye :
This frolic wisdom was his carven owl.
His ram was lordship on the lonely hills,
Alert and fleet, content only to know
The wind mightily pouring on his fleece,
With yesterday and all unrisen suns
Poorer than disinherited ghosts. His bat
Was ancient envy made a mockery,
Cowering below the newer eagle carved

Above the arches with wide pinion spread,
His faith's dominion of that happy dawn.

And so he wrought the gods upon the wall,
Living and crying out of his desire,
Out of his patient incorruptible thought,
Wrought them in joy was wages to his faith.
And other than the gods he made. The stalks
Of bluebells heavy with the news of spring,
The vine loaded with plenty of the year,
And swallows, merely tenderness of thought
Bidding the stone to small and fragile flight;
Leaves, the thin relics of autumnal boughs,
Or massed in June. . . .
All from their native pressure bloomed and sprang
Under his shaping hand into a proud
And governed image of the central man,—
Their moulding, charts of all his travelling.
And all were deftly ordered, duly set
Between the windows, underneath the sills,
And roofward, as a motion rightly planned,
Till on the wall, out of the sullen stone,
A glory blazed, his vision manifest,
His wonder captive. And he was content.

And when the builders and the carvers knew
Their labour done, and high the temple stood
Over the cornlands, king and counsellor
And priest and chosen of the people came
Among a ceremonial multitude
To dedication. And, below the thrones
Where king and archpriest ruled above the throng,
Highest among the ranked artificers
The carvers stood. And when, the temple vowed
To holy use, tribute and choral praise
Given as was ordained, the king looked down
Upon the gathered folk, and bade them see
The comely gods fashioned about the walls,
And keep in honour men whose precious skill
Could so adorn the sessions of their worship,
Gravely the carvers bowed them to the ground.

Only the man with wide and patient eyes
Stood not among them; nor did any come
To count his labour, where he watched alone
Above the coloured throng. He heard, and looked
Again upon his work, and knew it good,
Smiled on his toad, passed down the stair unseen,
And sang across the teeming meadows home.

A Town Window

Beyond my window in the night
  Is but a drab inglorious street,
Yet there the frost and clean starlight
  As over Warwick woods are sweet.

Under the grey drift of the town
  The crocus works among the mould
As eagerly as those that crown
  The Warwick spring in flame and gold.

And when the tramway down the hill
  Across the cobbles moans and rings,
There is about my window-sill
  The tumult of a thousand wings.

The New Miracle

Of old men wrought strange gods for mystery,
  Implored miraculous tokens in the skies,
And lips that most were strange in prophecy
  Were most accounted wise.

The hearthstone's commerce between mate and mate,
  Barren of wonder, prospered in content,
And still the hunger of their thought was great
  For sweet astonishment.

And so they built them altars of retreat
  Where life's familiar use was overthrown,
And left the shining world about their feet,
  To travel worlds unknown.

. . . . . .

We hunger still. But wonder has come down
  From alien skies upon the midst of us;
The sparkling hedgerow and the clamorous town
  Have grown miraculous.

And man from his far travelling returns
To find yet stranger wisdom than he sought,
Where in the habit of his threshold burns
Unfathomable thought.

Memory

One told me in the stress of days
  Of ease that memory should bring,
And so I feared my trodden ways
  For snares against my labouring.

Lest I should spend my brain amiss
  In wrath for bitterness gone by,
Or amorous for some old kiss,
  I would not deal with memory.

Because one said—" In memory
  Is half the health of your estate,"
I smote the dead years under me,
  I smote, and cast them from my gate.

The Boundaries

Although beyond the track of unseen stars
Imagination strove in weariless might,
Yet loomed at last inviolable bars
That bound my farthest flight.

And when some plain old carol in the street
Quickened a shining angel in my brain,
I knew that even his passionate wings should beat
Upon those bars in vain.

And then I asked if God omnipotent
Himself was caught within the snare, or free,
And would the bars at his command relent,—
And none could answer me.

Last Confessional

For all ill words that I have spoken,
For all clear moods that I have broken,
  For all despite and hasty breath,
  Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

Death, master of the great assize,
Love, falling now to memories,
  You two alone I need to prove,
  Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For every tenderness undone,
For pride when holiness was none
  But only easy charity,
  O Death, be pardoner to me.

For stubborn thought that would not make
Measure of love's thought for love's sake,
  But kept a sullen difference,
  Take, Love, this laggard penitence.

For cloudy words too vainly spent
To prosper but in argument,

When truth stood lonely at the gate,
On your compassion, Death, I wait.

For all the beauty that escaped
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,
For wonder that was slow to move,
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,
For life defeated of its dues,
This latest word of all my breath—
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

For Corin To-day

Old shepherd in your wattle cote,
I think a thousand years are done
Since first you took your pipe of oat
And piped against the risen sun,
Until his burning lips of gold
Sucked up the drifting scarves of dew
And bade you count your flocks from fold
And set your hurdle stakes anew.

And then as now at noon you'ld take
The shadow of delightful trees,
And with good hands of labour break
Your barley bread with dairy cheese,
And with some lusty shepherd mate
Would wind a simple argument,
And bear at night beyond your gate
A loaded wallet of content.

O Corin of the grizzled eye,
A thousand years upon your down

You've seen the ploughing teams go by
  Above the bells of Avon's town;
And while there's any wind to blow
  Through frozen February nights,
About your lambing pens will go
  The glimmer of your lanthorn lights.

Mad Tom Tatterman

" Old man, grey man, good man scavenger,
Bearing is it eighty years upon your crumpled back ?
What is it you gather in the frosty weather,
Is there any treasure here to carry in your sack ? "

. . . . . .

" I've a million acres and a thousand head of cattle,
And a foaming river where the silver salmon leap;
But I've left fat valleys to dig in sullen alleys
Just because a twisted star rode by me in my sleep.

" I've a brain is dancing to an old forgotten music
Heard when all the world was just a crazy flight of dreams,
And don't you know I scatter in the dirt along the gutter
Seeds that little ladies nursed by Babylonian streams ?

" Mad Tom Tatterman, that is how they call me.
Oh, they know so much, so much, all so neatly dressed;

I've a tale to tell you—come and listen, will you ?—
One as ragged as the twigs that make a magpie's nest.

" Ragged, oh, but very wise. You and this and that man,
All of you are making things that none of you would lack,
And so your eyes grow dusty, and so your limbs grow rusty—
But mad Tom Tatterman puts nothing in his sack.

" Nothing in my sack, sirs, but the Sea of Galilee
Was walked for mad Tom Tatterman, and when I go to sleep
They'll know that I have driven through the acres of broad heaven
Flocks are whiter than the flocks that all your shepherds keep."

Mamble

I NEVER went to Mamble
That lies above the Teme,
So I wonder who's in Mamble,
And whether people seem
Who breed and brew along there
As lazy as the name,
And whether any song there
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,
And that is all I know
Of the narrow road to Mamble,
And should I turn and go
To that place of lazy token
That lies above the Teme,
There might be a Mamble broken
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble
And take another road

To as good a place as Mamble
Be it lazy as a toad ;
Who travels Worcester county
Takes any place that comes
When April tosses bounty
To the cherries and the plums

Love's Challenge

When days are words, and all is done,
And we together lie alone
In our last city, and the sun
Can no more serve us than a stone—

If then the riches that are signed
In shapes of perishable earth
Should know denial, and the mind
That counted them be nothing worth,

If love that orders patiently
Upon the lover's brain the one
True stature of the loved should be
Less than the dust when all is done,

Should love be forfeit, but a sound
Of days outlasted by a rhyme,—
Then would eternity be found
Apostate in the court of time.

The Poet to His Mistress

If I should take
Less thought of gentleness
For your dear sake
Than for the poignant labours that possess
My blood, then surely by so much were signed
My shame and loss in the world's recording mind.

If you should be
Jealous of my desire,
And, loving me,
Rebuke my patient hopes from your sweet fire,
Then would you take a lover to your bed
Abased with the pale submission of the dead.

Love's House

I

I KNOW not how these men or those may take
  Their first glad measure of love's character,
Or whether one should let the summer make
  Love's festival, and one the falling year.

I only know that in my prime of days
  When my young branches came to blossoming,
You were the sign that loosed my lips in praise,
  You were the zeal that governed all my spring.

II

In prudent counsel many gathered near,
  Forewarning us of deft and secret snares
That are love's use. We heard them as we hear
  The ticking of a clock upon the stairs.

The troops of reason, careful to persuade,
  Blackened love's name, but love was more than
    these,
For we had wills to venture unafraid
  The trouble of unnavigable seas.

III

Their word was but a barren seed that lies
  Undrawn of the sun's health and undesired,
Because the habit of their hearts was wise,
  Because the wisdom of their tongues was tired.

For in the smother of contentious pride,
  And in the fear of each tumultuous mood,
Our love has kept serenely fortified
  And unusurped one stedfast solitude.

IV

Dark words, and hasty humours of the blood
  Have come to us and made no longer stay
Than footprints of a bird upon the mud
  That in an hour the tide will take away.

But not March weather over ploughlands blown,
  Nor cresses green upon their gravel bed,
Are beautiful with the clean rigour grown
  Of quiet thought our love has piloted.

V

I sit before the hearths of many men,
  When speech goes gladly, eager to withhold
No word at all, yet when I pass again
  The last of words is captive and untold.

We talk together in love's house, and there
  No thought but seeks what counsel you may give,
And every secret trouble from its lair
  Comes to your hand, no longer fugitive.

VI

I woo the world, with burning will to be
  Delighted in all fortune it may find,
And still the strident dogs of jealousy
  Go mocking down the tunnels of my mind.

Only for you my contemplation goes
  Clean as a god's, undarkened of pretence,
Most happy when your garner overflows,
  Achieving in your prosperous diligence.

VII

When from the dusty corners of my brain
Comes limping some ungainly word or deed,
I know not if my dearest friend's disdain
Be durable or brief, spent husk or seed.

But your rebuke and that poor fault of mine
Go straitly outcast, and we close the door,
And I, no promise asking and no sign,
Stand blameless in love's presence as before.

VIII

A beggar in the ditch, I stand and call
My questions out upon the queer parade
Of folk that hurry by, and one and all
Go down the road with never answer made.

I do not question love. I am a lord
High at love's table, and the vigilant king,
Unquestioned, from the hubbub at the board
Leans down to me and tells me everything.

Of Greatham

(TO THOSE WHO LIVE THERE)

SPENDTHRIFT of ease, importunate of will,
  Daily we bid at learning's mart, and speak
In speech that is but vanity, for still
  We know not what we seek.

. . . . . .

For peace, than knowledge more desirable
  Into your Sussex quietness I came,
When summer's green and gold and azure fell
  Over the world in flame.

And peace upon your pasture-lands I found,
  Where grazing flocks drift on continually,
As little clouds that travel with no sound
  Across a windless sky.

Out of your oaks the birds call to their mates
  That brood among the pines, where hidden deep
From curious eyes a world's adventure waits
  In columned choirs of sleep.

Under the calm ascension of the night
  We heard the mellow lapsing and return

Of night-owls purring in their groundling flight
Through lanes of darkling fern.

Unbroken peace when all the stars were drawn
Back to their lairs of light, and ranked along
From shire to shire the downs out of the dawn
Were risen in golden song.

. . . . . .

I sing of peace who have known the large unrest
Of men bewildered in their travelling,
And I have known the bridal earth unblest
By the brigades of spring.

I have known that loss. And now the broken thought
Of nations marketing in death I know,
The very winds to threnodies are wrought
That on your downlands blow.

I sing of peace. Was it but yesterday
I came among your roses and your corn ?
Then momently amid this wrath I pray
For yesterday reborn.

The Defenders

His wage of rest at nightfall still
  He takes, who sixty years has known
Of ploughing over Cotsall hill
  And keeping trim the Cotsall stone.

He meditates the dusk, and sees
  Folds of his wonted shepherdings
And lands of stubble and tall trees
  Becoming insubstantial things.

And does he see on Cotsall hill—
  Thrown even to the central shire—
The funnelled shapes forbidding still
  The stranger from his cottage fire ?

On the Picture of a Private Soldier who had gained a Victoria Cross

No daemon in that face ; he stands
  Strangely as one of men that build,
In multitudes, with servile hands,
  The temples that they have not willed.

Yet once he smote the prison walls,
  And strode the hills of chance again,
And scattered to their burials
  The prudent devils of his brain.

The old monotonies may keep
  Anew the sessions of their power . . .
His heart shall carry down to sleep
  The spoils of an eternal hour.

Eclipse

A MAN is dead . . . another dead . . .
God! can you count the companies
Of stars across dear heaven spread?
They are numbered even as these.

Blind brain of the world! And is the day
Moving about its Christmas bells?
Poor spinning brain, and wellaway . . .
Christ . . . Christ? But no man tells.

The thoughts of men are kings. They keep
The crown, the sepulchre, the song.
The thoughts of men are kings. They sleep. . . .
The thrones are empty overlong.

So rebel death a million-fold
Of lamentable service takes.
The prophesying heart is cold. . . .
Is cold . . . or breaks.

What now were best ? Some little thing ?
To trim the dock-weed, cleanse the floor,
To die, to grieve on death, to bring
The pitcher to the door ?

Dig deep the grave, hew down the tree,
Shatter the millstones, break the plough.
And was there once a Calvary ?
And thorns upon His brow ?

Nocturne

O ROYAL night, under your stars that keep
  Their golden troops in charted motion set,
The living legions are renewed in sleep
  For bloodier battle yet.

O royal death, under your boundless sky
  Where unrecorded constellations throng,
Dispassionate those other legions lie,
  Invulnerably strong.

The Ships of Grief

On seas where every pilot fails
A thousand thousand ships to-day
Ride with a moaning in their sails,
Through winds grey and waters grey.

They are the ships of grief. They go
As fleets are derelict and driven,
Estranged from every port they know,
Scarce asking fortitude of heaven.

No, do not hail them. Let them ride
Lonely as they would lonely be . . .
There is an hour will prove the tide,
There is a sun will strike the sea.

The Poets to the Heroes

Let us devise a music for to-day,
Solemn and sweet, worthy of solemn things,
For death now takes an unfrequented way.
Careless of age, his black and terrible wings
Fold upon youth; the full imaginings
Of midmost life are but a little clay.

Let sorrow sing the sorry forfeiture
Of life that sailed upon the central sky
Full-orbed in glad dominion, and secure
As life may be beneath mortality;
Let sorrow sing: the bitter laurels lie
On brows fore-darkened of death's signature.

Most heavy toll has death of all the rare
Bright bounty of the summertide of men,
The brain of spring is stricken unaware,
The flowing boughs are hewn. Make music then
Solemn and sweet, till death shall choose again
The winter tree and the grey-dusted hair.

Solemn, with notes that are not of the time
When plough nor scythe nor sickle is afield,
But chanted as remembering a prime
Cold in defeat, the rusting of a shield
Too soon put by, poor lips and vision sealed
When all the world was yet to see and rhyme.

Solemn, with sound of guns that make salute
Over a million graves untimely kept,
Solemn, with sound of tears that may dispute
No more with grief so long a day unwept,
Solemn, because the wiser angel slept,
Solemn, because the golden choirs were mute.

Yet sweet, for every nobleness is sweet,
Building above all bleak and envious power
Rigours and fames and chronicles to greet
The equal stars. And never fairer flower
Of nobleness was sprung than in this hour
When youth and death in tragic bridals meet.

Sweet, for the sacrifice that now is made,
Sweet, for the soul's victorious desire,

Sweet, for the hope whereof in price is paid
This ranging fury of destroying fire,
Sweet, for the wings that beat above the pyre
Of happy men whose faith was unbetrayed.

The stars dispute not, and the primrose makes
Its bower unbidden underneath the thorn;
Nor profits it, when the black angel wakes,
To rail on death with argument forlorn;
Then surely to heroic song was born
This hour of earth that time so surely breaks.

Into your lonely silences you go
And death is your imperishable deed,
We bring you honour, and you shall not know,
We bring you music, and you shall not heed;
Yet is our song not measured by your need,
Being our sorrow's crown and overthrow.

They also Serve

Bride birds among your leaves to-day
  Watching from England green,
Your mates have gone what sorrier way,
  And you, what have you seen ?—

Of all things known but this you know—
  Against the falling night
The myriad mates for ever go,
  Upon some alien flight.

Hushed upon frosty trees you wait
  That paragon of springs,
When seaward shall the sound be great
  Of fond returning wings.

From Generation to Generation

Long since the sorrows of the nightingales
Came throbbing through the night to lattices
Where women watched whose amours had made rich
The days of soldiers now gone out in mail
And carven plate, with battleaxe and bow,
Faring and fallen, or happily to be
Home on some twilight road, a lonely spear. . . .

Long since, that so these ladies and their loves,
And casements looking on to battlefields
Where still a loyal crest might wear a rose,
Have perished, or grown fabulous, all song,
Or mist of mummers, or a crazy tale
For those book-learnèd fools who miss the
world. . . .

There is a wood in Warwickshire to-day,
Haunted and hushed with midnight nightingales—
O summer song. And there are fields of France,
And fields, O love, by many an alien sea. . . .

*Riddles, R.F.C.**

(1916)

He was a boy of April beauty ; one
Who had not tried the world ; who, while the sun
Flamed yet upon the eastern sky, was done.

Time would have brought him in her patient ways—
So his young beauty spoke—to prosperous days,
To fulness of authority and praise.

He would not wait so long. A boy, he spent
His boy's dear life for England. Be content :
No honour of age had been more excellent.

* Lieut. Stewart G. Ridley, Royal Flying Corps, sacrificed his life in the Egyptian desert in an attempt to save a comrade. He was twenty years of age.

For April 23rd

(1616–1916)

One thing to-day
For England let us pray—
That, when this bitterness of blood is spent,
Out of the darkness of the discontent
Perplexing man with man, poor pride with pride,
Shall come to her, and loverly abide,
Sure knowledge that these lamentable days
Were given to death and the bewildered praise
Of dear young limbs and eager eyes forestilled,
That in her home, where Shakespeare's passion grew
From song to song, should thrive the happy-willed
Free life that Shakespeare drew.

To Edmund Gosse

I

Sometimes youth comes to age and asks a blessing,
Or counsel, or a tale of old estate,
Yet youth will still be curiously guessing
The old man's thought when death is at his gate;
For all their courteous words they are not one,
This youth and age, but civil strangers still,
Age with the best of all his seasons done,
Youth with his face towards the upland hill.
Age looks for rest while youth runs far and wide,
Age talks with death, which is youth's very fear,
Age knows so many comrades who have died,
Youth burns that one companion is so dear.
So, with good will, and in one house, may dwell
These two, and talk, and all be yet to tell.

II

But there are men who, in the time of age,
Sometimes remember all that age forgets:
The early hope, the hardly compassed wage,
The change of corn, and snow, and violets;

They are glad of praise; they know this morning
brings
As true a song as any yesterday;
Their labour still is set to many things,
They cry their questions out along the way.
They give as who may gladly take again
Some gift at need; they move with gallant
ease
Among all eager companies of men;
And never signed of age are such as these.
They speak with youth, and never speak amiss;
Of such are you; and what is youth but this?

Birthright

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
  Because a summer evening passed ;
And little Ariadne cried
  That summer fancy fell at last
To dust ; and young Verona died
  When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
  Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
  To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
  And little Ariadne sleep.

Olton Pools

(TO G. C. G.)

Now June walks on the waters,
And the cuckoo's last enchantment
Passes from Olton pools.

Now dawn comes to my window
Breathing midsummer roses,
And scythes are wet with dew.

Is it not strange for ever
That, bowered in this wonder,
Man keeps a jealous heart ? . . .

That June and the June waters,
And birds and dawn-lit roses,
Are gospels in the wind,

Fading upon the deserts,
Poor pilgrim revelations ? . . .
Hist . . . over Olton pools !

September

Wind and the robin's note to-day
Have heard of autumn and betray
  The green long reign of summer.
The rust is falling on the leaves,
September stands beside the sheaves,
  The new, the happy comer.

Not sad my season of the red
And russet orchards gaily spread
  From Cholesbury to Cooming,
Nor sad when twilit valley trees
Are ships becalmed on misty seas,
  And beetles go abooming.

Now soon shall come the morning crowds
Of starlings, soon the coloured clouds
  From oak and ash and willow,
And soon the thorn and briar shall be
Rich in their crimson livery,
  In scarlet and in yellow.

Spring laughed and thrilled a million veins,
And summer shone above her rains
To fill September's faring ;
September talks as kings who know
The world's way and superbly go
In robes of wisdom's wearing.

Sunrise on Rydal Water

(TO E. DE S.)

COME down at dawn from windless hills
  Into the valley of the lake,
Where yet a larger quiet fills
  The hour, and mist and water make
    With rocks and reeds and island boughs
    One silence and one element,
    Where wonder goes surely as once
    It went
      By Galilean prows.

Moveless the water and the mist,
  Moveless the secret air above,
Hushed, as upon some happy tryst
  The poised expectancy of love ;
    What spirit is it that adores
    What mighty presence yet unseen ?
    What consummation works apace
    Between
      These rapt enchanted shores ?

Never did virgin beauty wake
  Devouter to the bridal feast
Than moves this hour upon the lake
  In adoration to the east ;
    Here is the bride a god may know,
    The primal will, the young consent,
    Till surely upon the appointed mood
    Intent
      The god shall leap—and, lo,

Over the lake's end strikes the sun,
  White, flameless fire ; some purity
Thrilling the mist, a splendour won
  Out of the world's heart. Let there be
    Thoughts, and atonements, and desires,
    Proud limbs, and undeliberate tongue,
    Where now we move with mortal oars
    Among
      Immortal dews and fires.

So the old mating goes apace,
  Wind with the sea, and blood with thought,

Lover with lover ; and the grace
Of understanding comes unsought
When stars into the twilight steer,
Or thrushes build among the may,
Or wonder moves between the hills,
And day
Comes up on Rydal mere.

Wordsworth at Grasmere

These hills and waters fostered you
  Abiding in your argument
Until all comely wisdom drew
  About you, and the years were spent.

Now over hill and water stays
  A world more intimately wise,
Built of your dedicated days,
  And seen in your beholding eyes.

So, marvellous and far, the mind,
  That slept among them when began
Waters and hills, leaps up to find
  Its kingdom in the thought of man.

Written at Ludlow Castle

(IN THE HALL WHERE COMUS WAS FIRST PERFORMED)

WHERE wall and sill and broken window-frame
Are bright with flowers unroofed against the skies,
And nothing but the nesting jackdaws' cries
Breaks the hushed even, once imperial came
The muse that moved transfiguring the name
Of Puritan, and beautiful and wise
The verses fell, forespeaking Paradise,
And poetry set all this hall aflame.

Now silence has come down upon the place
Where life and song so wonderfully went,
And the mole's afoot now where that passion rang,
Yet Comus now first moves his laurelled pace,
For song and life for ever are unspent,
And they are more than ghosts who lived and sang.

Holiness

If all the carts were painted gay,
  And all the streets swept clean,
And all the children came to play
  By hollyhocks, with green
  Grasses to grow between,

If all the houses looked as though
  Some heart were in their stones,
If all the people that we know
  Were dressed in scarlet gowns,
  With feathers in their crowns,

I think this gaiety would make
  A spiritual land.
I think that holiness would take
  This laughter by the hand,
  Till both should understand.

The City

A SHINING city, one
Happy in snow and sun,
And singing in the rain
A paradisal strain. . . .
Here is a dream to keep,
O Builders, from your sleep.

O foolish Builders, wake,
Take your trowels, take
The poet's dream, and build
The city song has willed,
That every stone may sing
And all your roads may ring
With happy wayfaring.

Daffodils

Again, my man of Lady Street,
Your daffodils have come, the sweet
Bell daffodils that are aglow
In Ryton woods now, where they go
Who are my friends and make good rhymes.

They come, these very daffodils,
From that same flight of Gloucester hills,
Where Dymock dames and Dymock men
Have cider kegs and flocks in pen,
For I've been there a thousand times.

Your petals are enchanted still
As when those tongues of Orphic skill
Bestowed upon that Ryton earth
A benediction for your birth,
Sun-daffodils that now I greet.

Because, brave daffodils, you bring
Colour and savour of a spring
That Ryton blood is quick to tell,
You should be borne, if all were well,
In golden carts to Lady Street.

Anthony Crundle

HERE LIES THE BODY OF
ANTHONY CRUNDLE,
FARMER, OF THIS PARISH,
WHO DIED IN 1849 AT THE AGE OF 82.
"HE DELIGHTED IN MUSIC."
R.I.P.

AND OF
SUSAN,
FOR FIFTY-THREE YEARS HIS WIFE,
WHO DIED IN 1860, AGED 86.

Anthony Crundle of Dorrington Wood
  Played on a piccolo. Lord was he,
For seventy years, of sheaves that stood
  Under the perry and cider tree;
  Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

And because he prospered with sickle and scythe,
  With cattle afield and labouring ewe,
Anthony was uncommonly blithe,
  And played of a night to himself and Sue;
  Anthony Crundle, eighty-two.

The earth to till, and a tune to play,
And Susan for fifty years and three,
And Dorrington Wood at the end of day . . .
May providence do no worse by me ;
Anthony Crundle, R.I.P.

Old Oliver

Old Oliver, my uncle, went
With but a penny for his needs,
Walking from Cotsall hill to Clent,
His pocket full of poppy seeds.

And every little lane along
He scattered them for good man's will,
And then he sang a happy song
From Clent again to Cotsall hill.

Derbyshire Song

Come loving me to Darley Dale
In spring time or sickle time,
And we will make as proud a tale
As lovers in the antique prime
Of Harry or Elizabeth.

With kirtle green and nodding flowers
To deck my hair and little waist,
I'll be worth a lover's hours. . . .
Come, fellow, thrive, there is no haste
But soon is worn away in death.

Soon shall the blood be tame, and soon
Our bodies lie in Darley Dale,
Unreckoning of jolly June,
With tongues past telling any tale;
My man, come loving me to-day.

I have a wrist is smooth and brown,
I have a shoulder smooth and white,
I have my grace in any gown
By sun or moon or candle-light. . . .
Come Darley way, come Darley way.

Millers Dale

Barefoot we went by Millers Dale
When meadowsweet was golden gloom
And happy love was in the vale
Singing upon the summer bloom
Of gipsy-crop and branches laid
Of willows over chanting pools,
Barefoot by Millers Dale we made
Our summer festival of fools.

Folly bright-eyed, and quick, and young
Was there with all his silly plots,
And trotty wagtail stepped among
The delicate forget-me-nots,
And laughter played with us above
The rocky shelves and weeded holes,
And we had fellowship to love
The pigeons and the water-voles.

Time soon shall be when we are all
Stiller than ever runs the Wye,

And every bitterness shall fall
To-morrow in obscurity,
And wars be done, and treasons fail,
Yet shall new friends go down to greet
The singing rocks of Millers Dale,
And willow pools and meadowsweet.

To the Lovers that come after us

Lovers, a little of this your happy time
Give to the thought of us who were as you,
That we, whose dearest passion in your prime
Is but a winter garment, may renew
Our love in yours, our flesh in your desire,
Our tenderness in your discovering kiss,
For we are half the fuel of your fire,
As ours was fed by Marc and Beatrice.
Remember us, and, when you too are dead,
Our prayer with yours shall fall upon love's spring
That all our ghostly loves be comforted
In those yet later lovers' love-making ;
So shall oblivion bring his dust to spill
On brain and limbs, and we be lovers still.

Love in October

The fields, the clouds, the farms and farming gear,
  The drifting kine, the scarlet apple-trees . . .
  Not of the sun but separate are these,
And individual joys, and very dear ;
Yet when the sun is folded, they are here
  No more, the drifting skies : the argosies
  Of wagoned apples : still societies
Of elms : red cattle on the stubbled year.

So are you not love's whole estate. I owe
  In many hearts more dues than I shall pay ;
Yet is your heart the spring of all love's light,
And should your love weary of me and go
  With all its thriving beams out of my day,
These many loves would founder in that night.

Defiance

O WIDE the way your beauty goes,
  For all its feigned indifference,
And every folly's path it knows,
  And every humour of pretence.

But I can be as false as are
  The rainbow loves which are your days,
And I will gladly go, and far,
  Content with your immediate praise.

Your lips, the shyer lover's bane,
  I take with disputation none,
And am your kinsman in disdain
  When all is excellently done.

A Christmas Night

Christ for a dream was given from the dead
To walk one Christmas night on earth again,
Among the snow, among the Christmas bells.
He heard the hymns that are his praise : *Noel*,
And *Christ is Born*, and *Babe of Bethlehem*.
He saw the travelling crowds happy for home,
The gathering and the welcome, and the set
Feast and the gifts, because he once was born,
Because he once was steward of a word.
And so he thought, " The spirit has been kind ;
So well the peoples might have fallen from me,
My way of life being difficult and spare.
It is beautiful that a dream in Galilee
Should prosper so. They crucified me once,
And now my name is spoken through the world,
And bells are rung for me and candles burnt.
They might have crucified my dream who used
My body ill ; they might have spat on me
Always as in one hour on Golgotha." . . .
And the snow fell, and the last bell was still,
And the poor Christ again was with the dead.

Invocation

As pools beneath stone arches take
  Darkly within their deeps again
Shapes of the flowing stone, and make
  Stories anew of passing men,

So let the living thoughts that keep,
  Morning and evening, in their kind,
Eternal change in height and deep,
  Be mirrored in my happy mind.

Beat, world, upon this heart, be loud
  Your marvel chanted in my blood,
Come forth, O sun, through cloud on cloud
  To shine upon my stubborn mood.

Great hills that fold above the sea,
  Ecstatic airs and sparkling skies,
Sing out your words to master me,
  Make me immoderately wise.

Immortality

I

When other beauty governs other lips,
And snowdrops come to strange and happy springs,
When seas renewed bear yet unbuilded ships,
And alien hearts know all familiar things,
When frosty nights bring comrades to enjoy
Sweet hours at hearths where we no longer sit,
When Liverpool is one with dusty Troy,
And London famed as Attica for wit . . .
How shall it be with you, and you, and you,
How with us all who have gone greatly here
In friendship, making some delight, some true
Song in the dark, some story against fear ?
Shall song still walk with love, and life be brave,
And we, who were all these, be but the grave ?

II

No ; lovers yet shall tell the nightingale
Sometimes a song that we of old time made,
And gossips gathered at the twilight ale
Shall say, " Those two were friends," or, " Unafraid
Of bitter thought were those because they loved
Better than most." And sometimes shall be told
How one, who died in his young beauty, moved,
As Astrophel, those English hearts of old.
And the new seas shall take the new ships home
Telling how yet the Dymock orchards stand,
And you shall walk with Julius at Rome,
And Paul shall be my fellow in the Strand ;
There in the midst of all those words shall be
Our names, our ghosts, our immortality.

The Craftsmen

CONFEDERATE hand and eye
  Work to the chisel's blade,
Setting the grain aglow
  Of porch and sturdy beam—
So the strange gods may ply
  Strict arms till we are made
Quick as the gods who know
  What builds behind this dream.

Petition

O Lord, I pray : that for each happiness
My housemate brings I may give back no less
Than all my fertile will ;

That I may take from friends but as the stream
Creates again the hawthorn bloom adream
Above the river sill ;

That I may see the spurge upon the wall
And hear the nesting birds give call to call,
Keeping my wonder new ;

That I may have a body fit to mate
With the green fields, and stars, and streams in spate,
And clean as clover-dew ;

That I may have the courage to confute
All fools with silence when they will dispute,
All fools who will deride ;

That I may know all strict and sinewy art
As that in man which is the counterpart,
Lord, of Thy fiercest pride ;

That somehow this beloved earth may wear
A later grace for all the love I bear,
For some song that I sing ;

That, when I die, this word may stand for me—
He had a heart to praise, an eye to see,
And beauty was his king.

A Man's Daughter

THERE is an old woman who looks each night
Out of the wood.
She has one tooth, that isn't too white.
She isn't too good.

She came from the north looking for me,
About my jewel.
Her son, she says, is tall as can be ;
But, men say, cruel.

My girl went northward, holiday making,
And a queer man spoke
At the woodside once when night was breaking,
And her heart broke.

For ever since she has pined and pined,
A sorry maid ;
Her fingers are slack as the wool they wind,
Or her girdle-braid.

So now shall I send her north to wed,
Who here may know
Only the little house of the dead
To ease her woe ?

Or keep her for fear of that old woman,
As a bird quick-eyed,
And her tall son who is hardly human,
At the woodside ?

She is my babe and my daughter dear,
How well, how well.
Her grief to me is a fourfold fear,
Tongue cannot tell.

And yet I know that far in that wood
Are crumbling bones,
And a mumble mumble of nothing that's good,
In heathen tones.

And I know that frail ghosts flutter and sigh
In brambles there,
And never a bird or beast to cry—
Beware, beware,—

While threading the silent thickets go
Mother and son,
Where scrupulous berries never grow,
And airs are none.

And her deep eyes peer at eventide
Out of the wood,
And her tall son waits by the dark woodside
For maidenhood.

And the little eyes peer, and peer, and peer ;
And a word is said.
And some house knows, for many a year,
But years of dread.

Venus in Arden

Now Love, her mantle thrown,
    Goes naked by,
Threading the woods alone,
    Her royal eye
Happy because the primroses again
Break on the winter continence of men.

I saw her pass to-day
    In Warwickshire,
With the old imperial way,
    The old desire,
Fresh as among those other flowers they went
More beautiful for Adon's discontent.

Those other years she made
    Her festival
When the blue eggs were laid
    And lambs were tall,
By the Athenian rivers while the reeds
Made love melodious for the Ganymedes.

And now through Cantlow brakes,
By Wilmcote hill,
To Avon-side, she makes
Her garlands still,
And I who watch her flashing limbs am one
With youth whose days three thousand years
are done.

May Garden

A SHOWER of green gems on my apple-tree
  This first morning of May
Has fallen out of the night, to be
  Herald of holiday—
Bright gems of green that, fallen there,
Seem fixed and glowing on the air.

Until a flutter of blackbird wings
  Shakes and makes the boughs alive,
And the gems are now no frozen things,
  But apple-green buds to thrive
On sap of my May garden, how well
The green September globes will tell.

Also my pear-tree has its buds,
  But they are silver yellow,
Like autumn meadows when the floods
  Are silver under willow,
And here shall long and shapely pears
Be gathered while the autumn wears.

And there are sixty daffodils
  Beneath my wall. . . .
And jealousy it is that kills
  This world when all
The spring's behaviour here is spent
To make the world magnificent.

Reciprocity

I DO not think that skies and meadows are
Moral, or that the fixture of a star
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees
Have wisdom in their windless silences.
Yet these are things invested in my mood
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,
That in my troubled season I can cry
Upon the wide composure of the sky,
And envy fields, and wish that I might be
As little daunted as a star or tree.

The Lechers

I saw three lechers walking by
  With bodies all forlorn,
Who had betrayed the symmetry
  Of love, and made a scorn
Of limbs grown to a lyric fire
Through generations of desire.

I heard three Statesmen buy and sell
  The souls that are a State,
Nor might one word of truth rebel
  Where cunning had for mate
Shallow necessity and blind ;
And these were lechers of the mind.

I would not have for comrades those
  Poor lechers of the street,
Yet they were fitter housefellows
  Than these who soil the sweet
Honour of thought, and bring the brain
To dark and brutish sloth again.

Dreams

We have our dreams ; not happiness.
Great cities are upon the hill
To lighten all our dream, and still
We have no cities to possess
But cities built of bitterness.

We see gay fellows top to toe,
And girls in rainbow beauty bright—
'Tis but of silly dreams I write,
For up and down the streets we know,
The scavengers and harlots go.

Give me a dozen men whose theme
Is honesty, and we will set
On high the banner of dreams . . . and yet
Thousands will pass us in a stream,
Nor care a penny what we dream.

The Hours

Those hours are best when suddenly
The voices of the world are still,
And in that quiet place is heard
The voice of one small singing bird,
Alone within his quiet tree ;

When to one field that crowns a hill,
With but the sky for neighbourhood,
The crowding counties of my brain
Give all their riches, lake and plain,
Cornland and fell and pillared wood ;
When in a hill-top acre, bare
For the seed's use, I am aware
Of all the beauty that an age
Of earth has taught my eyes to see ;

When Pride and Generosity
The Constant Heart and Evil Rage,
Affection and Desire, and all
The passions of experience
Are no more tabled in my mind,
Learning's idolatry, but find

Particularity of sense
In daily fortitudes that fall
From this or that companion,
Or in an angry gossip's word ;

When one man speaks for Every One,
When Music lives in one small bird,
When in a furrowed hill we see
All beauty in epitome—
Those hours are best ; for those belong
To the lucidity of song.

Foundations

Those lovers old had rare conceits
To make persuasion beautiful,
Or rail upon the pretty fool
Who would not share those wanton sweets
That, guarded, soon are bitterness.

But we, my love, can look on these
Old tournaments of wit, and say
What novices of love were they,
Who loved by seasons and degrees,
And in the rate of more and less.

We will not make of love a stale
For deft and nimble argument,
Nor shall denial and consent
Be processes whereof shall fail
One surety that we possess.

Day

Dawn is up at my window, and in the may-tree
The finches gossip, and tits, and beautiful sparrows
With feathers bright and brown as September
hazels.

The sunlight is here, filtered through rosy curtains,
Docile and disembodied, a ghost of sunlight,
A gentle light to greet the dreamer returning.

Part the curtains. I give you salutation
Day, clear day ; let us be friendly fellows.
Come. . . . I hear the Liars about the city.

Politics

You say a thousand things,
Persuasively,
And with strange passion hotly I agree,
And praise your zest,
And then
A blackbird sings
On April lilac, or fieldfaring men,
Ghostlike, with loaded wain,
Come down the twilit lane
To rest,
And what is all your argument to me ?

Oh yes—I know, I know,
It must be so—
You must devise
Your myriad policies,
For we are little wise,
And must be led and marshalled, lest we keep
Too fast a sleep
Far from the central world's realities.
Yes, we must heed—

For surely you reveal
Life's very heart ; surely with flaming zeal
You search our folly and our secret need ;
And surely it is wrong
To count my blackbird's song,
My cones of lilac, and my wagon team,
More than a world of dream.

But still
A voice calls from the hill—
I must away—
I cannot hear your argument to-day.

Birmingham—1916

Once Athens worked and went to see the play,
And Thomas Atkins kissed the girls of Rome,
In council in Victoria Square to-day
Are grey-beard Nazarenes, with shop and home
And counting-house and all the friendly cares
That Joseph knew; in Bull Ring markets meet
Gossips as once at Babylonian fairs,
And Helen walks in Corporation Street.

Now Troy is Homer; and of Nazareth
Grave histories are of one love that was strong;
Athens is beauty; Rome an immortal death;
And Babylon immortal in a song. . . .
Perplexed as ours these cities were of old;
And shall our name greatly as these be told?

With Daffodils

I SEND you daffodils, my dear,
For these are emperors of spring,
And in my heart you keep so clear
So delicate an empery,
That none but emperors could be
Ambassadors endowed to bring
My messages of honesty.

My mind makes faring to and fro,
Deft or bewildered, dark or kind,
That not the eye of God may know
Which motion is of true estate
And which a twisted runagate
Of all the farings of my mind,
And which has honesty for mate.

Only my love for you is clean
Of scandal's use, and though, may be,
Far rangers have my passions been,—
Since thus the word of Eden went,—
Yet of the springs of my content,
My very wells of honesty
Are you the only firmament.

For a Guest Room

All words are said,
And may it fall
That, crowning these,
You here shall find
A friendly bed,
A sheltering wall,
Your body's ease,
A quiet mind.

May you forget
In happy sleep
The world that still
You hold as friend,
And may it yet
Be ours to keep
Your friendly will
To the world's end.

For he is blest
Who, fixed to shun

All evil, when
The worst is known,
Counts, east and west,
When life is done,
His debts to men
In love alone.

On Reading the MS. of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals

To-day I read the poet's sister's book,
She who so comforted those Grasmere days
When song was at the flood, and thence I took
A larger note of fortitude and praise.

And in her ancient fastness beauty stirred,
And happy faith was in my heart again,
Because the virtue of a simple word
Was durable above the lives of men.

For reading there that quiet record made
Of skies and hills, domestic hours, and free
Traffic of friends, and song, and duty paid,
I touched the wings of immortality.

The Old Warrior

Sorrow has come to me,
Making the world to be
  Of sunken cheek;
Faded my fields, and of
Names that were most to love,
  I dare not speak.

Would that my soul were blind,
Since beauty brings to mind
  All that is done,
Saying, "How gladly you
Walked with your chosen few
  Under my sun."

I am an alien now;
Tell me, good stranger, how
  Best may be borne
His grief who comes at night
To his own window-light
  Friendless, forlorn.

No. I will pass. Again
Of my delight in men
  Nothing shall tell.
Now is my travel where
My lost companions fare ;
  Onward. Farewell.

The Guest

Sometimes I feel that death is very near,
And, with half-lifted hand,
Looks in my eyes, and tells me not to fear,
But walk his friendly land,
Comrade with him, and wise
As peace is wise.

Then, greatly though my heart with pity moves
For dear imperilled loves,
I somehow know
That death is friendly so,
A comfortable spirit ; one who takes
Long thought for all our sakes.

I wonder ; will he come that friendly way,
That guest, or roughly in the appointed day ?
And will, when the last drops of life are spilt,
My soul be torn from me,
Or, like a ship truly and trimly built,
Slip quietly to sea ?

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